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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BROTHERHOOD OF FREE RUSSIA

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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The Brotherhood of Free Russia;

OR,

NICK CARTER'S BEAUTIFUL FRIEND OLGA.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE POWER OF TWO FIENDS.

Nick Carter leaped from his bed at a bound and seized the desk-telephone that rested upon a small table near him, for the bell had rung out so sharply that he sensed rather than knew that it was an emergency call.

"Hello!" he called into the transmitter; but he got no farther than that, for the instant the receiver was at his ear, he heard the voice of a woman cry out to him—a voice that he recognized at once:

"Nick Carter! Nick Carter!! For Heaven's sake——"

And that was all.

"Hello!" he called. "Hello—hello!!"

There was no response, and he repeated the call many times, listening between the words for some sound of some kind at the opposite end of the wire.

But not one came to him. All was as silent as if there had been no call at all; and he knew, too, that the receiver at the opposite end of the line had been dropped and not replaced upon the hook as it should have been.

"Olga Dovanief's voice," he murmured to himself, still with the receiver at his ear. "But where is she? Why does she not call again? What in the world can be the matter?"

He sat silently, with the receiver at his ear, listening to that deathlike silence at the other end of the wire, while moment after moment passed into nothingness.

He realized that this was one of the occasions where patience stood some show of being rewarded, if he only exercised it to the limit, for the absence of that other receiver from the hook was proof positive that some one would return to replace it before very long; at least so it seemed to him.

He only hoped that "Central" would not butt in and inquire in those dulcet tones we have all learned to recognize: "Are you through? Waiting?"

And presently the voice did inquire:

"Waiting? Are you through?"

"Yes; I'm waiting, Central," he replied calmly. "Please don't ask again. I will ring off when I have no further use for the wire."

Nick knew that later he could ask any questions he wished to, of Central; but now he only wanted to hear voices again from that same room where the original call had been made; and he knew that if persons did step into

that room and indulge in conversation, without noticing that the receiver was off the hook, he would be able to hear more or less distinctly all that they might say.

It was a mere question of patience on his part, and now, since he had recognized the voice of Olga Dovanief in that agonized call, he was resolved to wait until he did hear something, if it were only the replacing of the receiver on the hook, even if he were compelled to sit there in that chair till morning.

He reached out and turned the electric-switch that was near at hand, and so turned on the lights; and he saw then that the hands of the clock pointed exactly at three.

Three o'clock in the morning.

It was a strange hour for Olga Dovanief to call him up, and he knew that she would not have ventured to do so save under the most dire extremity.

And so he waited while the minutes chased each other into the past, holding the receiver tightly against his ear, and listening to nothing.

It has been said that all things come to him who waits, and at last, when he had three times responded to the impatience of Central, telling her at last to charge the extra time to him instead of to the end from which the call had come—at last, after more than an hour had elapsed since he leaped from the bed, his patience was rewarded.

He heard a door open and close. He heard the heavy tread of two persons crossing a room on a bare floor, and a hardwood floor at that, as he could readily determine by the almost metalic quality of the sound.

He heard a chair wheeled into place, evidently for the purpose of bringing two chairs close together for a confidential talk between the persons who intended to occupy them—and he could tell by the sound that those same chairs were drawn almost beneath the telephone, if it hung against the wall, or directly beside it, if it stood upon a desk or table, as was the case with himself. The detective realized now that if fortune favored him so far as to prevent either of those two from discovering the fact that the receiver was down, he would be able to overhear everything that passed between them.

The conversation that ensued was in Russian, but it was as perfectly intelligible to the detective as if it had been in English.

The voices were the voices of men, and they talked calmly, as if their discourse were upon the most commonplace of subjects, instead of what it was.

And the detective gave a great start, and almost uttered an exclamation when he heard the sound of the first voice that broke the silence, for he recognized that instantly, as he had done when he heard Olga; only this time it was the voice of the nihilist chief, Strovanoff, that came to him.

Strovanoff, whom the detective thought to be safely in prison. Nick Carter thanked his stars now that he had effectually stopped Central from further interruption until he should ring off.

The voice of the second man in that room was unknown to the detective, but concerning Strovanoff's he was certain, and it mattered very little to whom the other might belong; that would develope later, he thought.

"That was a close shave, Berger," he heard Strovanoff say; and he could hear the man chuckle grimly as he did so; he could also hear the snap of a parlor-match against something, as if the Russian were in the act of lighting a cigar or a cigarette.

"She would have got away in another ten minutes," replied the man called Berger, who uttered his Russian words with a slight accent which proclaimed him to be a German. Germans are apt to fall down almost as badly in Russian as they do sometimes in English.

There was an interval of silence after that, as if Strovanoff were thinking deeply before he spoke again; but then he said:

"Berger, I wonder if I can trust you—thoroughly? Eh?"

"You ought to be better able to answer that question than anybody else, Strovanoff," was the quick reply.

"I suppose so."

"I have already served you faithfully enough so you should have no doubt on that point, it seems to me."

"Nor have I any doubt, Berger; at least I would have none at all were the service I require now of the same character as the others you have rendered."

"Oho! I see. You want me to do something for you which is not entirely connected with the brotherhood, eh?"

"I want you to perform a service for me which is not at all connected with the Brotherhood of Free Russia, and for which the brotherhood would be the first to call me to account, if the facts became known to the council," replied Strovanoff calmly.

And there was another silence after that, as if Berger were hesitating before he committed himself; but at last he said tentatively:

"I don't think I quite understand that last remark of yours, Strovanoff."

"It was plain enough."

"Perhaps, but it didn't go quite far enough."

"What more could I say?"

"Do you mean that you are meditating anything that is or that might be construed as traitorous?"

Nick could hear Strovanoff laugh unpleasantly at this and he replied:

"I don't know how it might be construed, Berger. I only know that it would not be traitorous. There might be those who would think it was. There might be those who would misconstrue my acts."

"And mine, also."

"Certainly yours also, if you assist me."

"Possibly, Strovanoff, we will understand each other better if you are somewhat more explicit."

"Can I trust you to the extent of telling you what is on my mind?"

"I think you can."

"Can't you guess what I am driving at, Berger?"

"I can only surmise that it has something to do with Olga Dovanief."

"You're a good guesser."

"Well, I don't see how or where the word traitorous comes in."

"You don't, eh? You ought to know as well as I that Olga is almost the idol of the whole membership of the brotherhood."

"I do know it."

"And you are also one of the number who fell down and worshiped at her feet, Berger; eh? Or rather, you *were* one of those who did so. I don't think you feel exactly the same now as you did at one time toward her, do you? She flouted you, didn't she?"

"Look here, Strovanoff, my temper is none of the best, as you know; and it will be just as well for our friendship if you leave that part of the subject out of the conversation. If I was fool enough to fall in love with her once, I have gotten over it; and that is sufficient on that point."

"Amply!"

"I am no longer a worshiper at her shrine. Now, what are you getting at?"

"Olga is here, in this house, at this moment, isn't she?"

"Yes—unless she has made her escape within the last few minutes."

"You know that she couldn't do that."

"Yes."

"She came here by stealth. The probability is that not a soul in all the world save ourselves has the least idea that she is here, or that she came here at all. You agree with me in that, do you not?"

"Yes."

"We found her here in this room, didn't we?"

"We did."

"And she was tampering, or rather she had been tampering with the lock of this desk, seeking to possess herself of some of the private papers of the brotherhood——"

"She had been tampering with the desk. I don't know yet what for, since she refused to tell us."

"But it is safe to suppose that she was after some of the private papers of the brotherhood, isn't it, since many of them are kept here?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, Berger, don't you see that in coming here, as she did, she has played directly into my hands, and that now that she is in my power, I don't intend to let her get away again. I have other views for her; another career for her than the one she follows, and I want your help. She is here, in our power. She is utterly helpless, and not another person in the world besides ourselves, knows it. Now, again, can I trust you, Berger?"

CHAPTER II.

A COMPACT BETWEEN TRAITORS.

The detective, listening intently at his end of the wire, realized that there was every probability that he was destined to overhear a conversation of considerable length and he settled himself for that purpose.

It was some moments before the man, Berger, responded to this last plea from Strovanoff; but finally, as if he had decided the matter in his mind, no matter what the consequences might be, Nick heard him reply:

"Yes, Strovanoff, you may trust me fully, and you know what that means when I say so."

It was evident from the creaking of the chair—and Nick Carter could hear even this, so perfectly was the telephonic connection working—that Strovanoff leaned forward eagerly toward his companion as he said:

"Do you realize all that you are promising me when you make that statement?"

"I think I do," was the answer.

"But, do you?"

"I believe that I do."

"Berger, do you realize that I am not at all what I seem to be? That although I am in person and in name the present chief of our brotherhood, I have many more irons in the fire than that one would indicate, notwithstanding its many ramifications?"

"I realize it fully, Strovanoff."

"That I am not what I seem?"

"Yes."

"And will you tell me what you understand by that statement of mine?"

"I understand from it that you are merely using the Brotherhood of Free Russia and the position you hold in that organization as a means to the accomplishment of personal ends."

Nick Carter could almost hear the sigh of relief that followed upon this remark of Berger's so that he could picture in his imagination the scene that was taking place in that room, the location of which was entirely unknown to him, as was the distance which intervened between those two men and the detective.

"You are right," he heard Strovanoff reply in a low tone, which was yet perfectly distinct. "I am using my membership in the brotherhood, as well as my official position in the brotherhood, for the attainment of personal ends, and as such I stand at this moment in the light of a traitor who has forfeited his life, were the truth known."

"I understand," said Berger.

"Shall I go still further?" said Strovanoff.

"You may go as far as you please, since I have made my promise."

"Would it overwhelm you, Berger, if I should confess to you that I am a traitor to the organization in fact as well as in appearance?"

"It would not even surprise me," was the calm reply.

"Not surprise you?"

"No."

"There can only be one explanation of that word from your lips, Berger."

"I know," said Berger, and Nick could almost see him nod his head.

"And that is," Strovanoff continued, "that you are yourself in the same boat with me."

There was no reply to this save a low chuckle from Strovanoff, but Nick Carter could see in his fancy the shrug that the Nihilist chief gave and the significant glances that the two men exchanged over this last, and, to each of them, astounding revelation.

"You are a spy, then," said Strovanoff eagerly, not as one who criticizes, but as one who asks eagerly for information, or, rather, confirmation of his thought.

"Yes," admitted Berger.

"In the employ of the secret police?"

"Yes, Strovanoff, credited to the Third Section."

"Has it always been so, Berger?"

"Always, since even before you knew me."

"And you make your reports to whom?"

"To the chief of the Third Section."

"You have made reports concerning me, I suppose?"

"Always."

"And concerning Olga and the others as well?"

"Concerning every individual with whom I have come in contact and in whom Russia is interested."

"May I venture to inquire, Berger, concerning the complexion of the reports that you have turned in about me, personally?"

It was Berger's turn to chuckle now, but he replied without hesitation.

"I have not hesitated to express it as my opinion that you were not too firmly wedded to the cause of Free Russia and that your allegiance to the brotherhood was a thing of very frail quality."

"Good!" exclaimed Strovanoff. "You are observant."

"It is my business to be observant; that is what I am paid for."

"Then you have suspected all along that I was, like yourself, a spy?"

"No, not exactly that, and yet I have had my doubts concerning you. I have not believed that you were exactly a spy, but as I said just now, I have been under the impression that it would require a very little urging and very few promises to make you one."

The detective, listening as he was, could hear Strovanoff laugh as if he were greatly amused by the turn that the conversation had taken, and presently he said:

"It's an odd thing, Berger, that you and I should have gotten together in the manner we have. Half an hour ago when we entered this room and found Olga Dovanief here searching among the papers, I was of two minds whether or not I should seek for a means of putting you to death before morning in order that the secret of her presence here and of my future conduct toward her might remain a secret. I did not suspect then and I have not suspected that you were a spy in the pay of Russia, and the intelligence comes upon me now almost like a shock. But it is a shock of joy I wish you to understand."

"I think," said Berger, with something of grimness in his reply, "that the surprise is mutually pleasant. And now, Strovanoff, what is the next move?"

"The most important one," said the chief, "is to assure ourselves as speedily as possible that Olga has taken no person into her confidence concerning her visit to this house."

"Why do you suppose she came here at all?" asked Berger.

"Her conduct at the time we discovered her should be sufficient answer to that."

"Oh, she was searching for papers I will admit, but for what papers?"

"Haven't you guessed that far?"

"I might if I ventured to do so—but I have not yet ventured."

It seemed almost as if a smile of significance must have been exchanged between the two men while Strovanoff, with something like a chuckle in his voice, said:

"Then try it now."

"It couldn't be," said Berger, "that she was making a search for the papers that are directly concerned with the business of the Brotherhood."

"No, Berger, that would not be my guess."

"Then there could have been but one other object in her desire."

"Yes," said Strovanoff tentatively.

"I should guess, therefore," Berger went on, "that the papers she was seeking were such as she suspected might incriminate you—might prove you to be a spy in the service of the czar, as you have just now asserted yourself to be."

"Exactly."

"Did you know that she suspected you?"

"Yes, I have known it for some time."

"It is evident then," said Berger, speaking slowly, "that Olga had determined before she came here to make her escape from America as soon as possible, and to return to Russia, and that she came here determined to possess herself of incriminating documents against you if she could

find such, in order to betray you to the inner circle of the brotherhood at St. Petersburg when she arrived there."

"You have hit the nail squarely on the head, Berger."

"But she found nothing."

"There was nothing for her to find. I am too careful for that."

"You asked me a moment ago, Strovanoff, to whom I reported. Now I put the same question to you."

"I report," said Strovanoff slowly, "to those who are much higher in authority than your chiefs."

"To the Council of the Empire?"

"To the czar himself!"

The detective heard the scraping of a chair on the floor as if Berger had started to his feet; and then after an instant of silence he heard a slap of hands together, as if these two self-confessed traitors and spies had suddenly discovered a reason for shaking hands over the compact they were making."

"I think now," said Strovanoff, "that we thoroughly understand each other."

"I think we do, and that there are no further confessions to make between us."

"It would seem not."

"You are aware, of course," continued Strovanoff, after another slight pause, "that it is absolutely necessary that I should thoroughly disguise myself and remain under cover for a time, since having eluded the police and escaped from prison as I did to-day, I will be diligently searched for."

"There is no doubt of that."

"Berger, do you realize what I have half a mind to do?"

"No."

"I believe that it would be well for me to delegate my powers of chief to you as I am empowered to do, and so to disappear utterly for a time."

It was evident that the other man nodded, for Strovanoff continued:

"Suppose I do that, Berger. Suppose I should make out the order now, delegating you as active chief, and should personally remain in the background for some considerable time."

"Yes?"

"Are you willing to assume the responsibilities that that would demand?"

"I certainly am."

"Will you do so?"

"I will."

"And submit yourself to my authority in so doing as completely and entirely as you have appeared to do in the past?"

"Yes."

"Then wait a moment while I write out the order now."

Again there was a silence in the room, during which Nick's imagination pictured the man writing out the order delegating the chieftainship of the Brotherhood of Free Russia to Berger; and then he heard Strovanoff say:

"Take it, Berger, and put it in your pocket. Go now to Olga in the next room and bring her here to me; and when you have done that, go at once to the meeting-place of the brotherhood in Ryerson Street, where I am sure you will find the executive circle still holding session, for the reason that they are expecting me there and had orders to await my coming. Go there and tell them I am free. Show them this paper delegating the chieftainship to you. Explain to them that I have chosen to disappear for a time, but assure them that I shall be constantly near at hand ready to interfere at any moment when necessity should require it."

"All right, Strovanoff; shall I say anything about Olga?"

"No, don't mention her name unless you are questioned about her, and then feign entire ignorance concerning her."

"Very good. And after I have reported; what then?"

"Nothing then."

"But when shall I see you again? Will you remain in this house?"

"I may or I may not. I have not determined upon that point. But you, Berger, will live here from now on, as I have done. In assuming the responsibilities of chief you become so in fact for the time. Here are the keys, and when you return to this house some time during the day that is rapidly approaching, you may search through the papers and the documents that are here until you have thoroughly familiarized yourself with their contents."

The detective could hear the scraping of a chair again, probably made by Berger as he got upon his feet and remarked:

"I will bring Olga to you, and then I will go to Ryerson Street."

A door opened and closed as the man left the room, and Nick could hear Strovanoff get upon his feet and stride up and down the room in catlike treads, which would not have been audible to the detective only for the metallic sounding hardwood floor upon which the man was walking.

Nick could hear Strovanoff laughing softly to himself, and could almost imagine him as rubbing his hands together in surprised glee over the turn affairs had taken, for there was no doubt that the chief who had so readily laid down his authority was infinitely pleased by the occurrences of the night.

And after a little, as the door closed again, Strovanoff resumed his chair, and Nick heard him say:

"So, my Queen of Nihilists, I cannot tell you what a delight it is to have this opportunity for a confidential interview with you. Berger, conduct Mademoiselle Olga to that chair, and then you may leave us."

A moment later the door once again closed, and Nick could hear the retreating footsteps of the man, Berger, as he left the house, and the detective knew that Olga was not only alone with Strovanoff, but was utterly in his power.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE IN FORTY-FIRST STREET.

Perhaps the reader can imagine something of the feelings of the detective as he sat beside his table in his own bedroom, dressed only in his pajamas, at an hour that was between three and four o'clock in the morning, engaged in listening over the telephone to this vital conversation that was at once so distant, and its locality so unknown.

His utter inability to do aught but listen was perhaps the most aggravating experience that had ever occurred in the life of the detective.

To know that Olga, in whom he felt more than a passing interest, was in such immediate personal danger while he was entirely powerless to do anything to assist her, was maddening.

He realized, however, that it was a piece of great good fortune to him that he had been enabled to overhear what had already been said between the two plotters.

As yet, he had no explanation concerning how he had originally been called to the telephone.

All that he knew was that Olga had evidently used it to call up his number and had had time only to use the three exclamations he had overheard before she was interrupted, and he realized now that probably she had dropped the receiver from her ear and left the telephone the instant she had heard some one approaching. This alone would account for the fact that the two men who afterward talked together in that room had failed to notice that the receiver was not upon the hook.

It was presently evident to the detective, as he listened, that Olga was seated so that she faced the telephone that was in the room, and had already discovered that the receiver had not been replaced. It was also evident that she hoped that there were listening ears, possibly Nick Carter's own, at the other end of that wire, and that she talked as much as she dared to do for the benefit of those listening ears.

She could not know that Nick Carter had responded to her call, for it was not likely that she had heard his "Hello" in reply to hers.

But still the detective argued to himself that Olga was an exceedingly far-seeing young woman, and that she might guess that he was listening even now to what was going on there in that room where she was a prisoner.

It was rather a remarkable situation, the like of which the detective had never known before.

When Berger left the room and the house, there was silence between Strovanoff and Olga for a considerable space, at length broken by Olga herself, who seemed to Nick to be talking almost directly into the transmitter.

"Strovanoff," she said to him, and her voice was as calm and as self-assured as if she had been in her own parlor, merely engaged in receiving a caller, "I wonder if you realize that you are almost at the end of your rope. I wonder if you appreciate the fact that I am not the only one who suspected you of being a spy in the pay of the czar. I wonder if you appreciate the fact that although I am apparently a helpless prisoner in your power at this moment there are those who will search for me, and will find me if you dare to keep me here, and who will wreak a terrible vengeance upon you for every act or word of yours against me."

Strovanoff's reply to this was a loud laugh.

"Why have you ventured to detain me here?" Nick heard Olga demand, after the sound of the laugh had subsided.

"Can you not guess, Olga?"

"No."

"It is to make terms with you, my beauty."

"To make terms with me? What sort of terms?" and Olga laughed derisively at the man with whom she was talking.

"You, at least, can guess that much," said Strovanoff.

"I prefer to make no attempt at guessing about the vagaries of a mind like yours, Strovanoff, but I will assure you that you are risking more than you are aware of in what you are doing now."

The man laughed at her again.

"You won't deny the knowledge of my admiration for you," he said, and Nick heard the scratching of a match, as if he were lighting a fresh cigar or cigarette.

"We will leave that subject out of the present discussion, if you please," Olga replied to him.

"On the contrary, Mademoiselle Olga, it is a subject that cannot be left out of any discussion that occurs between us. When I came into this house to-night, after my escape from the authorities, I discovered you here, searching through my papers. You would not have been here had you known I was at liberty."

"That is quite true," she laughed back at him.

"For what were you searching?"

"I might reply in your own words: you should be able to guess that."

"It was certainly not your wish to inspect the papers that belong to the brotherhood?"

"I had no need to do that Strovanoff; I know them all by heart."

"Then you were seeking for private papers that belonged to me only?"

"To you and to your employer, the czar, yes."

"Did you think I would be fool enough to leave such papers in this house, even if such existed?"

"They do exist and I know it, even as you know it."

"Admitting that they do exist, did you think I would be fool enough to leave them here?"

"You have been fool enough in the past to do more idiotic things than that, Strovanoff."

"And supposing that you had found such; what would you have done with them?"

"What would I be likely to do with them?"

"We play at questions and answers, Olga. You suspect me of being a spy; you came here to search for papers that would prove me such, and if you had not been interrupted and had found such documents, you would either have turned them over to the members of the brotherhood who are already in this country, or you would have taken them with you to Russia—if it was your intention to go there at once."

"Such was my intention," she replied.

Nick heard the man get upon his feet and cross the floor, evidently toward her, for she exclaimed:

"Keep your distance, Strovanoff; it did not occur to you and that other spy, Berger, to deprive me of the weapon I carried, when you captured me. I have it here, and I will use it if you compel me to do so."

Strovanoff laughed—not a pleasant laugh—and he replied with some uneasiness:

"Do you think I fear a little toothpick-affair like that one?"

"You may have cause to fear it if you come too close."

"Olga, can we not come to terms?"

"Terms!" she cried out with scorn in her voice. "What terms could any one with a particle of self-respect make with such as you?"

"Listen to me, Olga. What you say is true that I am in the pay of the czar. I have been promised great honors by him in person for what I have already done, and I have but to return to St. Petersburg to ask for them in order to receive them."

"Well," she said, "go on; you are interesting now."

"I have long suspected that you are the same; I am almost sure of it, but whether you are or not; whether you are true to the Brotherhood of Free Russia, or are yourself a spy in the pay of the czar, makes no difference to me now, for in the former case I am powerful enough to protect you, and in the latter you would need no protection, save from those whom you have appeared to serve."

"Go on," she said again.

"While you were waiting just now, in that other room, Berger and I have been consulting. I have delegated to him, as I have a right to do, my powers and authority as chief of this circle of the brotherhood. My explanation for doing so, as given to him, was merely that because of my late escape from prison it would be better for me to remain in disguise and concealment for a considerable time. But the truth is, Olga, that I have determined to return to Russia at once. I had already guessed that such was your intention, and now I say to you that if you will consent to it, we will go there together; there is a steamship now in the harbor which sails for Cronstadt to-day. Once back in St. Petersburg, the future would be clear for both of us; I will receive promotion and be given a place of power in the empire, while you, as my wife——".

A peal of laughter from Olga interrupted Strovanoff, and Nick could hear him mutter a curse and half start to his feet.

"So!" she exclaimed, "has your conceit grown so great that you dream I would consent to such a compromise as that?"

"There are other reasons why you will be glad to give your consent," he said coldly.

"Ah! You threaten me now."

"If you choose to call it a threat, yes."

"Perhaps, Strovanoff, you will be more explicit."

"You are absolutely in my power."

"Indeed?"

"No one, save Berger, in all the world knows that you are here, and he will not return."

"Again, well?"

"And even if he should do so, I have already won him to my way of thinking."

"Go on, Strovanoff, I have not heard the threat yet."

"Even your friend, Nick Carter, would not be able to find you if he should search for you now. He has no idea of the existence of this house, or if he did guess that such a place existed, he would not know how to find it. I am convinced that you told no one of your intention to come here——"

Olga held up her hand and stopped him. The mention of the name of Nick Carter had recalled to her mind the fact that the telephone-receiver was off the hook and that there was just the possibility that Nick Carter himself, or some one who would convey the information to him, might be listening to all that was being said in that room, and she replied, raising her voice to be sure that it would carry:

"Nick Carter would find it easy enough to discover the location of this house, Strovanoff. He would only have to turn into Forty-first Street from Broadway and walk eastward on the south side of the street until he arrived in front of a house where there is a star and crescent set in the cement pavement directly in front of it; he would know then that he had found the house. If he but knew now, he would lose no time in getting here to my rescue, and it would fare ill with you, Strovanoff, if he should come!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MESSAGE IN THE HANDKERCHIEF.

Strovanoff's reply to this statement of Olga's was another laugh.

"You talk in theatricals, Olga," he said.

"I talk to a purpose," she replied.

"Do you think," he laughed, "that you have developed a gift of telepathy, and that by uttering such a direction as that to me here in the solitude of this room, for although we are together, it is still a solitude, that the message can be conveyed to him and that he will respond to it? Your defiance is useless, Olga, and you may as well look the conditions squarely in the face as they exist."

She made no reply, and he continued:

"I have told you there is a ship in the harbor that sails for Cronstadt to-day, and now I tell you that you shall be a passenger on that steamer with me whether you are willing or not. It is for you to say if you will go there quietly, because if you will not do so, I shall take you there by force."

The detective was still listening.

His impulse was to drop the receiver he was holding at his ear, to get into his clothing as quickly as possible, and to hasten to Olga's assistance the instant he heard the directions to find the house. But as he listened, he felt impelled to remain where he was and to gather all the information he could before he acted.

He heard Strovanoff get upon his feet again after the last statement, and the man's assured tread across the room as he approached Olga followed it.

He could hear Olga leap to her feet also, and he heard the rattle of steel, as if there were manacles on her wrists which she had shaken as she started back, and he thought himself wondering how she would contrive to make use of the weapon she had said she possessed when handicapped by such conditions.

"Stand back, Strovanoff!" he heard her exclaim.

"Bah, Olga! Do you think I am afraid of that?" replied the man, still advancing.

Then there was a sound as if the man had suddenly leaped forward; there came a short, sharp cry of affright from Olga; there was a crash as if something in the room —a chair probably—had been overturned.

There was a sound of a futile struggle; Nick could even hear the sharp breathing of the two; a muffled cry for help from Olga and a curse from Strovanoff, as he exclaimed:

"You have stabbed me, you cat!"

Then came the clatter of something on the floor, as if the slender weapon had been torn from Olga's grasp and thrown there by the man who attacked her, then Olga uttered a piercing scream, and cried out:

"Help! Help! Nick Carter, come to me! For Heaven's sake, help me!"

And then, as the detective started to his feet, he heard a half moan, half sob from Olga, followed by the crashing of a body upon the floor, and then in the exultant tones of Strovanoff, the one word in English:

"There!"

Nick Carter had almost placed the receiver of his telephone upon the hook, but now, with sudden inspiration, and remembering that the transmitter in the room where the struggle had occurred would act almost as a receiver for the persons there, he placed his lips quickly against his own transmitter, and shouted out with all the strength of his voice:

"Hands up, Strovanoff, or I'll kill you!"

Without waiting to listen for the effect of his words in that room, in the house in Forty-first Street, the detective dashed the receiver upon the hook, seized his clothing and dressed himself with all possible speed. Within six minutes of the time he had shouted that warning over the wire, he dashed from the front door of his house into the street, and just as dawn was beginning to break, ran swiftly up the avenue toward the house from which he had overheard so much.

There was no other conveyance at hand than nature had provided for him, and he knew that he could arrive at his destination much more quickly by running than in any other way.

The streets of the city at that hour are almost deserted in certain localities, and during the entire distance that Nick covered he encountered no one at all.

It could not have exceeded fifteen minutes from the time he left his house, or twenty-five minutes at the utmost, since the warning he had given, before he came to a halt in front of a brownstone and eminently respectable-looking residence in Forty-first street, where a star and a crescent of copper had been set in the cemented walk. For one instant now, he hesitated, scanning the front of the house critically.

There was nothing about it to indicate that it was the resort of a horde of conspirators, and as he looked, he noticed that the shades, or the inside blinds, of the windows were drawn or closed, and that the front door looked as though it had not been opened for weeks. Daylight was almost at hand, for the dawn had advanced considerably, even in the time he had taken in making his short journey. He dashed up the steps to the front door, producing his little pick-lock as he did so, and in a startlingly short time threw open the door of the vestibule of the house and stepped inside, for, as he supposed would be the case, the door was locked only with a latch.

He listened for a moment inside the vestibule, but hearing no sound whatever from the interior, he applied his instrument to the inner door with the same success he had already met with, and presently passed inside the house and stood within its hallway.

Again he paused to listen, asking himself as he did so in which room the telephone would most likely be located, for he knew that it was in that room he must seek.

The answer was obvious, for in houses of that pattern the telephone, if not in the hallway, is invariably consigned to the back parlor or extension of the house, if

there is one, and now Nick ran through the hall and threw open the door at the end of it, which admitted him to that apartment.

Three gas jets were burning in the chandelier over a square desk in the middle of the room. Two chairs, that which had been located at the desk and one that was across the room from it, were overturned. A poniard with a jeweled hilt was on the floor midway between the two chairs. Over against the wall, between the windows at the rear of the room, was a telephone with the receiver still hanging at the end of its cord below the hook. On the floor, near one of the overturned chairs, was a crumpled cambric handkerchief, evidently dropped there by Olga during her struggle with Strovanoff.

And that was all.

Other than has been described, there was no sign of human presence in that room, or, indeed, in the house, and Nick Carter realized that while his warning shout over the telephone wire might have prevented immediate injury to Olga, it had also served the purpose of warning Strovanoff that the conversation in that room had been overheard, and that the location of the house was known to the man who had called out.

And it was evident that Strovanoff had lost no time in making his escape and in taking Olga with him.

But first, leaving the conditions in the room exactly as they were, the detective made a tour of the house, entering and rapidly searching each room and closet within it, pounding upon walls and testing panels for possible hiding places, but discovering nothing—nor had he anticipated that he would do so.

Satisfied that there was no human being in the house, the detective returned to the room which had been the scene of the struggle, and having put out the lights that were blazing there, picked up the poniard that had been carried by Olga and consigned to one of his pockets, and then secured possession of the crumpled handkerchief already referred to. The moment he raised it from the floor, he smiled, for as his hand closed upon it he felt the stiffness of a folded paper inside the delicate cambric, and he knew even before he made an examination that Olga had contrived by that expedient to leave a written message for him.

Nor was he mistaken.

When he opened the handkerchief a folded sheet of yellow paper almost dropped from it to the floor, and with it open in his hand, Nick crossed to one of the windows, where, by the daylight that had now asserted itself, he read the contents of the message.

It was as follows:

"Will the person who finds this message please forward it to Nick Carter, without delay? Strovanoff has escaped; he is here in this house; a man named Berger is with him. I came here to procure papers necessary to me and was captured by Strovanoff and Berger. What their purpose with me is I do not know, but I am in terrible peril, which grows greater with every moment that I am in Strovanoff's power. There is a ship that sails for Cronstadt from Martin's Stores, in Brooklyn, at three o'clock in the afternoon of to-morrow. I had intended to take passage on that vessel, and will still do so if I can make it, but more than likely I cannot do so. I pray that Nick Carter, by his friendship for me, which I believe he feels, will come to my assistance without delay.

"Olga Dovanief."

The detective read the message twice, then folded it carefully and put it in his pocket.

It was evident to him that she had written it under great difficulties, while her wrists were bound together by manacles of some sort, and that she had employed a piece of wrapping paper that she had found in the room where she was temporarily a prisoner while Strovanoff and Berger were consulting.

It was an irony of fate, so far as Olga was concerned, that, had she not gone to that house, as she had done, and so fallen into the hands of Strovanoff, she would have been as badly off in that respect, or possibly worse, later on, by finding herself a passenger on board the same ship on which he had elected to return to Russia.

But would the man still adhere to that determination now that he had reason to suppose his plans had been overheard across the wire of the telephone?

This was the question that the detective asked himself while he stood there pondering over the strange evidences of the night that had just passed.

CHAPTER V.

STROVANOFF'S ESCAPE.

"The house in Ryerson Street!"

Nick Carter paused on the corner of Broadway and uttered the sentence aloud, although there were no persons near enough to him to hear it. The conviction was upon the detective at that moment that Strovanoff would abandon his original plans entirely.

The man would naturally suppose that the entire conversation that had taken place in the room of the house in Forty-first Street between himself and Berger, as well as the one with Olga, had been overheard, and he was crafty enough to realize instantly the importance of changing everything he had intended to do.

It had suddenly occurred to the detective that the house in Ryerson Street, as referred to in the conversation between Strovanoff and Berger, might be the first goal the man would seek with Olga as his prisoner, although there were arguments against that move.

He would remember that Nick Carter must have heard that house mentioned, as well as the other ones; and then again it might not be desirable for him to take Olga to

that place, since in that case she would be among her friends, among men who were devoted to her.

But the detective reasoned in that instant that the house in Ryerson Street might prove to be a source of information of some sort, and that at least it would be well for him to visit it, since there was no other clue of any description to follow.

It was true that the detective knew that he would find Berger at that house, and that Berger would ultimately return to the house in Forty-first Street as he had been directed to do by his chief; but the fact remained that Berger would be as ignorant of the movements of Strovanoff as Nick Carter himself, for the detective readily understood that it had been Strovanoff's intention to keep Berger in ignorance of his own determination to return to Russia immediately.

An empty hansom was passing the corner at that moment, and Nick halted it, directing that he be driven at once to his own house, and there he rapidly disguised himself, for he realized that now his personality was so well known to the members of the Brotherhood of Free Russia, and to the chief conspirators in it, that for what he wanted to accomplish that day, it would be useless for him to retain his own personality.

When he left the house he took Patsy with him, since Patsy happened to be the only one of the assistants who was there at the time, and as they hurried through the street toward the Third Avenue elevated road, Nick said to him:

"Patsy, over at Martin's Stores, in Brooklyn, which are located between Fulton and Wall Street ferries, on that side of the river, there is a ship—a tramp, I suppose—which is to sail for Cronstadt, in Russia, at three o'clock this afternoon. I don't know the name of the vessel or her nationality. In fact, I have told you all that I do know about her. But, Patsy, I want you to find that ship at once; to go aboard of it and to stay aboard of it until the moment comes for them to cast off, in order to go to sea; and even then if you can make arrangements with the pilot who takes her out to set you ashore again, sail with him.

"It may be that the man, Strovanoff, will disguise himself as a sailor, or in some way manage to conceal himself aboard of her, and so sail away in spite of the warning he thinks I have received; and if he does that, he will have Olga with him."

"I understand," said Patsy.

"If you are convinced, when the moment for sailing arrives, that neither Strovanoff nor Olga are aboard that vessel, you may leave it at the wharf."

"All right."

"If you are not convinced beyond all possible doubt in your own mind, you will sail with the ship and make arrangements to be put ashore by the pilot when he leaves it,—provided you have decided by that time that the persons we seek are not aboard the vessel."

Patsy nodded.

"But if at that time there is any doubt in your mind, you will remain aboard the vessel, and if necessary go all the way to Cronstadt in her; and I need not say to you that if it turns out that Olga is aboard that ship, you are to befriend her in all circumstances to the utmost extremity."

"I'll do that all right, chief."

"Now, one word more. I don't know where I shall go or what I shall do before three o'clock this afternoon, but it is possible that my devious ways will bring me to that vessel before it sails. Whether I appear or not, Patsy, you are to carry out the directions I have given you to the letter."

They walked on in silence for fifty yards more, and then Nick produced two folded papers from one of his pockets and handed them to Patsy.

"Here," he said, "are two fake warrants that I have filled out, and to which I have signed a magistrate's name. Take them and put them in your pocket, and if Strovanoff and Olga do appear, if you are able to find them before the ship sails, the safest course for all concerned will be for you to place them both under arrest."

"I understand," said Patsy.

"After doing that, you will turn Strovanoff over to the first policeman you can find, or call, with the statement that he is an escaped prisoner and must be returned at once to the Tombs."

"And what about Olga?" asked Patsy.

"You may tear up the warrant for her arrest as soon as you have separated her from Strovanoff; and then conduct her at once to my house."

"What shall I do in case I find them aboard the vessel after we have sailed from the wharf?"

"You must be governed by circumstances in regard to that, and you must act upon your own judgment."

"How so?"

"Well, for instance, if you can convince the captain of that ship of the advantage it would be to him to permit you—and even to assist you—to take your captives ashore, do so. But if you are persuaded that he is inimical to you and to what you want to accomplish, keep your identity a secret from them as long as possible, or, at least, desirable."

The detective left Patsy at the Houston Street station, the latter continuing on to the Bridge to go aboard the ship, ultimately, as he had been directed to do, while Nick descended to the street, hurried toward the house he had decided to visit before he attempted any other course of procedure.

And now for the sake of the chronology of the story, we must return for a moment to what occurred in the back parlor of the house in Forty-first Street when Nick Carter shouted out his warning to Strovanoff over the wire.

The man had already seized upon Olga, and she had attempted to strike him with the poniard, but had succeeded in inflicting only a very slight wound in his shoulder.

Strovanoff had torn the weapon from her grasp and flung it upon the floor, and had thrown her backward so that she fell, when that warning cry sounded out in the room, in a voice that seemed almost supernatural, coming to them as it did through the transmitter and the hanging receiver of the telephone.

Strovanoff staggered backward as if he had received a blow, for his first impression was that some one had rushed into the room upon them.

But as he wheeled about and saw that there was no other person there, and listening for a moment, heard no further sound, his eyes presently fell upon the telephone itself, and he laughed aloud, bounding toward it as he did so.

Olga was at that moment struggling to her feet, white with anger, and honestly affrighted by the predicament she had found herself in.

But she had heard Nick Carter's voice, as well as Strovanoff had, and she believed that she recognized it.

The mere sound of it, and the warning it conveyed, brought a thrill of joy to her, for she knew that the detective would lose no time in finding that house, the location of which she had fortunately given so that he could hear it if he were listening.

But her elation was of short duration.

Following upon that laugh, Strovanoff wheeled, and striding towards her, seized her by the arms, and with a savage gleam in his eyes, he said to her:

"Olga Dovanief, as sure as I am a living man, I'm speaking the truth to you now. If you will go with me quietly, in my escape from this house, you shall remain unharmed; but if you offer the slightest resistance, or attempt to call out for assistance when you are on the street, I will instantly kill you, no matter what the consequences may be. Do you believe me?"

"Yes," was the reply, for she did know that he meant literally what he said.

"What is your decision?"

"I will go with you," she replied faintly.

"Remember that I have warned you."

"I remember."

"If you offer the slightest impediment to our escape, I will kill you that instant, if I meet my own death the next!"

And so it was that they had fled from the house before Nick Carter's arrival there.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP.

Patsy experienced no difficulty whatever in finding the location of the ship which was to sail for Cronstadt, for a few questions among the longshoremen elicited the information he desired, and presently he found himself standing near one of the gang-planks over which swarms of men were still conveying the last consignments of freight for the voyage.

He stood idly about for some time keenly observant of all that was going on, but at last made his way out further upon the pier, to the gang-plank which communicated with the upper deck and which had been placed there for the use of the officers of the vessel.

A quartermaster was there in charge, and to him Patsy addressed himself.

"I am looking for the captain of the ship," he said. "I am not mistaken, am I? This vessel sails this afternoon for Cronstadt, in Russia?"

"You are correct, sir," was the reply.

"Where may I find the captain?"

"He is ashore at present, but I think he will return at almost any moment."

"Are you permitted to carry passengers on this voyage?" asked Patsy, after a moment of hesitation.

"We are permitted to do so, but it is not our custom to carry passengers."

"Do you know if there are any passengers, or if there is one passenger, who has engaged accommodations for this voyage?"

The quartermaster thought a moment, and then replied:

"I don't know whether there is or not, but I am of the opinion that there are two who have applied for passage, and that it is because of that fact that the captain happens now to be ashore."

"Have the prospective passengers already gone aboard?" asked Patsy.

"One of them is already there, waiting now for the return of the captain."

"It is a man, of course?" asked Patsy, endeavoring to make the question impersonal and to have it sound as if it were asked merely from a desire to keep up the conversation.

"Yes," replied the quartermaster; and then in response to a call, he turned away before completing what he was evidently about to say, and Patsy perceiving that the gang-plank was for the moment unguarded, passed up it and along to the deck of the ship.

He stood there for a moment leaning against the rail, wondering if the quartermaster would recall him, and waiting to see if he did so, but the man appeared to pay no further attention to him, and so, after an interval, Patsy walked forward toward the bridge and the wheel-house that was under it.

It was still early in the day, and there were at least five or six hours before the vessel would cast loose and start upon her long voyage across the Atlantic and through the North and the Baltic Seas for Cronstadt.

Patsy knew that his own personality was entirely unknown to Strovanoff and to the other members of the Brotherhood of Free Russia, and even to Olga Dovanief herself, so he had no fear of being recognized or having his identity associated with Nick Carter should he be seen by any of them, and, therefore, he stood about negligently observing with the manner of one who is curiously interested, the appointments of the ship and the bee-hive-like activity of the men who were completing its loading.

And while he stood there he saw a heavy-featured, powerfully-built man come rapidly down the wharf with the rolling gait peculiar to sailors, and although he wore no uniform or insignia of office whatever, Patsy had no difficulty in recognizing the captain of the vessel in this personage.

The man stopped at the foot of the gang-plank to exchange a few words with the quartermaster, and then raised his eyes quickly and looked toward Patsy with an inquiring glance, indicating that the quartermaster had already informed him of the man who was seeking him. After a moment he boarded the vessel and walked directly toward where Patsy was standing.

"You wish to see me, sir?" he asked, in excellent English, although there was no doubt that he was a Russian, or possibly a German, and Patsy replied:

"Yes, if you are the captain of this vessel and she is bound for Cronstadt."

"I am the captain and my ship has cleared for Kronstadt. What can I do for you?"

"I had it in mind to apply for passage aboard of her," said Patsy.

"I think we could accommodate you," was the ready answer, given with a smile and a slight shrug of his shoulders. "You must understand, however, that this is not a passenger ship, although if matters continue as they have begun I don't know but what she will be changed into one."

"Why," said Patsy, "have you had other applications?"

"Yes, you are the fifth."

"The fifth? May I inquire who the others are, if you have decided to take them, for one of my reasons in desiring to make this trip was the likelihood that I might, perhaps, be the sole passenger, or at least one of two or three."

"You are likely to be one of five if you go with us."

"Again, may I ask who the other passengers are, captain?"

"Well, I don't know much about them myself, except that there are two men and two women, and that they all seem to be Russians. You are an American, are you not?"

"Yes," said Patsy. "Are any of the other passengers aboard the ship now?"

The captain eyed him keenly without answering, and, after a moment, he answered, without giving any offensive sound to the statement.

"You seem to be mightily interested in my other passengers, sir."

Patsy shrugged his shoulders and laughed, brought out two cigars from his pocket and extended one to the captain, while he replied:

"It's quite natural isn't it that a man contemplating a voyage as long as this one should wish to know something about those who will sail with him?"

"Oh, that's all right," replied the captain, "only if you will permit me to say so, it does strike me that if you had had an idea of taking this voyage because you would be the only passenger on the ship you would have made your application to sail with us long before this. Isn't it true, sir, that you have decided only within the last few hours, or, to put it more clearly, since daylight this morning, to take this trip?"

"Perhaps so," said Patsy, "but what difference does that make?"

"Oh, it makes no difference to me, only I have been sailing into Cronstadt a good many years, and from ports that are scattered all over the world. I have carried a great many passengers to the seaport of St. Petersburg, and I know a great deal about the character of the people who are likely to want to go there. For instance, mister, I could guess the first time pretty nearly who you are and what your business is."

"All right," said Patsy, laughing good-naturedly, "let's hear you guess."

"Well," said the captain, lighting his cigar before he continued, "in the first place you are not a Russian."

"No," said Patsy.

"And, therefore, it is not likely that you are interested in the politics of Russia."

"No, it isn't likely."

"In the second place, the voyage across the Atlantic and through the North Sea and the Baltic on this particular vessel at this particular time of year, is not the one that a husky young chap like yourself would be likely to take for the fun of the thing."

"Perhaps you are right about that, too, captain."

"And if you have business of any importance to take you over there you wouldn't go by a vessel that's going to occupy about sixteen days in making the trip, for that's the least possible time in which we can make it; it is more likely to be twenty."

"I'll admit that you're right about that, too, captain," said Patsy, with an air of utter indifference.

"So this morning, a few hours before I'm ready to cast off and put to sea, you make an application to come with me, at the same time evincing rather an extraordinary interest in your fellow passengers."

"Well?"

"Well, now, I've got to my guess; you're going to make the voyage, if you do make it, because you are interested in those passengers or in one of them, or maybe two of them, and as the others are all Russians, there couldn't be but one thing to make you interested in any of them, and that is because you are being paid for being interested, and so you see, sir, if you are paid for being interested and, taking all the other circumstances that I have explained into consideration, it follows, to me, that you are a detective, and that you are on the trail of one of those same passengers. That's my guess."

Patsy was silent for several seconds before he replied; for while he was not exactly amazed at the ready penetration displayed by the captain of the ship, he was still in doubt how to take the man.

"Suppose, captain, you had guessed correctly, what then?" he asked presently.

The captain shrugged his shoulders and thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, rolling the cigar from one side of his mouth to the other and then back again, and replied, with a short laugh:

"Nothing then, so far as I am concerned. If you take passage on my ship and pay your fare and conduct yourself properly while you are aboard of it, nothing else concerns me at all."

"Do you feel the same lack of interest about the personal aims of your other passengers?" asked Patsy.

"I feel the same lack of interest about the concerns of all men, save one, and that one is myself. I mind my own business, and all I ask of others is to do the same."

"Then, if I confess that you have guessed correctly——" began Patsy.

"You needn't make any confessions, because I know I have."

"Do you know a man named Strovanoff?" asked Patsy quickly and sharply.

The captain started a little at this and frowned slightly; then he laughed.

"I have heard of such a person," he said. "Why?"

"Is he one of the persons who has applied for passage aboard your ship?"

The frown on the captain's face grew deeper, and he seemed perplexed for an aswer, but after a moment he replied:

"No. Why?"

"Are you sure?" persisted Patsy.

"I am sure that name has not been mentioned to me."

"I will put the question in another form then, captain; has a Russian, accompanied by a young woman, applied to you for passage this morning?"

"No."

"Has any application been made to you this morning by anybody for passage on your ship?"

"Yes; one."

"Who was that?"

"I don't know his name, but he happens to be standing in front of me now, looking at me and asking me a lot of questions."

Patsy permitted himself to laugh at this, and then he said quickly:

"Will you take me with you when you sail?"

"Yes, if you think you can put up with our accommodations and have got the money for the passage."

Again Patsy hesitated for a moment, for, under the instructions given him by Nick Carter, he was not at all certain that it would be necessary for him to cross in this vessel, but presently he said:

"Captain, since you have guessed so ably concerning my business and the reasons that I have for questioning you, I will pay you half the passage money now, which you may keep if I decide to leave the ship before you sail, and if I decide to cross with you there will be no difficulty about the balance of it, for I will show you that I have it with me."

"That will be all right," said the captain. "Make yourself comfortable, Mr.——"

"Garvan," said Patsy.

"Make yourself comfortable, Mr. Garvan. I don't suppose you want to be consigned to your room now?"

"No, there will be ample time for that later."

The young detective counted out the money he had agreed to give the captain, down, under the arrangement that was made, and then having paid him, said:

"I don't suppose there is any objection to my looking about the ship a bit?"

"Not at all," said the captain; "go anywhere you please," and he turned on his heel and left Patsy again, alone.

For a moment after the captain left him, the young detective remained where he was standing, wondering just what it would be best for him to do, and then he turned abruptly and walked around to the opposite side of the vessel away from the wharf, intending as soon as he found an open door to pass inside and to search as thoroughly as he could, without attracting attention to himself, for evidences of the presence of the persons he sought.

Near the waist of the ship, an open door attracted his atention, and he stepped quickly through it, and then halted abruptly. Standing directly in front of him and face to face with him, was a man whom he instantly knew was Strovanoff.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE HOLD OF THE VESSEL.

If Patsy had concluded that he would be unknown to Strovanoff he was speedily undeceived, for the man stood there before him quietly, but with a cold and cynical smile on his handsome face, and as soon as Patsy came to a halt, Strovanoff said:

"I thought, from what I have been told, that I would meet Nick Carter at this doorway. I see that I was mistaken."

"Yes," said Patsy, "you are mistaken."

"But, although you are not Nick Carter, you are one of those fresh individuals whom he calls 'assistants,' are you not?"

Patsy's temper was always easily aroused, as we know, and it was the manner of this man, rather than the words he used, that incensed the young Irishman now, so that he responded:

"I have the honor to be an assistant to Nick Carter, and you are Strovanoff, an escaped prisoner, for whom I have a warrant of arrest."

The young detective took a step forward as he made this statement, but Strovanoff leaped nimbly backward so that he placed a chair between himself and Patsy, and then, as the young detective passed still further into the room, and the door closed with a bang behind him, Strovonoff laughed exultingly.

"Will you be pleased to serve your warrant?" he asked tauntingly.

Patsy realized instantly that he had walked into a trap, for, with the closing of the door behind him, came also the sound of the shooting of a bolt into place, and the knowledge that there were other persons in that room besides Strovanoff and himself, although as yet he had seen none of them.

"'Walk into my parlor,' said the spider to the fly," laughed Strovanoff sneeringly. "We'll first dispose of you, my young friend, and then we will wait for and receive Nick Carter in the same way. I suppose he sent you here, didn't he?"

Patsy did not reply.

He was concluding how he could best escape from the trap that had been sprung upon him and from the predicament in which he now found himself, for a quick glance around had shown him that there were three other men in that room, where they had evidently been waiting for him, and that they would not only remain, but that they were ready to use their weapons instantly should occasion require it.

He thought he understood now the meaning of the captain during the conversation he had just had with him.

It was evident the master of the ship was in sympathy and thoroughly in league with Strovanoff and his followers, and that it was he who had betrayed the young detective to them. He had no doubt, now, that the captain, the moment he left him out there near the wheelhouse, had gone directly to inform Strovanoff of the presence of a detective aboard the ship.

The young detective was almost too angry to consider his predicament calmly, for he felt that he had permitted himself to act stupidly in carrying out the instructions that Nick Carter had given him, and he realized that it was the demeanor and the outward air of the captain that had made him for a moment neglectful of his own responsibility.

He saw, too, that it would be useless to struggle against these four men under the circumstances, for while Strovanoff exhibited no weapon whatever, the other three who stood between the young detective and the door had theirs ready for instant use, and Patsy did not doubt that they would resort to any extremities in order to prevent his escape now that they had him in their power.

"That was a very clever trick of Nick Carter's, listening over the telephone to what I had to say," continued Strovanoff. "It is a wonder he didn't come directly to the ship himself instead of sending you. He should have known that it is never well to send a boy to the mill."

Patsy's chagrin over what had happened and his anger induced by the manner and the words of Strovanoff, were brought to a climax by this remark, and with true Irish indifference to the consequences, he sprang forward at this, and did it so quickly, that before Strovanoff could avoid him, Patsy's fist had landed upon his forehead, almost felling him to the deck.

But with the same instant, the other men sprang toward Patsy, so that before he could recover from the attack he had made, he was seized upon all sides, and although he struggled valiantly, he was borne to the deck and held there by three men, while Strovanoff stood over him, softly rubbing with his handkerchief a red spot on his forehead, but nevertheless laughing softly at the plight of his young foe.

And at that instant there came a quick rap upon the door.

"Open!" ordered Strovanoff, and instantly one of the men obeyed him, revealing the moon-shaped face of the bearded captain, whose broad shoulders almost filled the doorway.

He, too, laughed, but it was the same good-natured, indifferent, jolly sort of laugh that Patsy had heard him indulge in before, and which he now knew to be a counterfeit.

"Got him, did you?" said the captain in Russian.

"Yes," replied Strovanoff, with a shrug, "we got him all right."

"Want some irons for him?"

"Yes; if you'll have your men take him below and iron him it will save me a good deal of trouble," was the cool response.

"You might have had a lot of trouble as it was, Strovanoff, if that young cub had not enlightened me as he did when I talked with him. Why in the world didn't you tell me who you were when you came aboard?"

"I feared to do so," said Strovanoff.

"Feared to tell me that you were Strovanoff, one of the council chiefs of the brotherhood!" exclaimed the captain.

"I didn't know you, captain," said the nihilist, "and it was my policy not to trust anybody too far."

The captain laughed heartily, slapping his thigh with exuberance, and exclaimed:

"And to think that this young fellow should be the one to betray it! He asked me out there on the deck if I knew a man named Strovanoff, and then if Strovanoff wasn't one of the passengers who were going to sea with me, and I just jumped to the conclusion that it was Strovanoff he was after, and that it was Strovanoff whom I had accepted as a passenger. Only, you see, he thought you'd engaged your passage this morning instead of yesterday. That put me off for a moment; however, it is all right now."

"Yes, it's all right now, and I am very grateful to you, captain, for the service you have done me."

The captain turned and gave some sharp orders to one of the men who had attacked Patsy, directing him to summon others of the crew and to bring the irons with which to confine him, and then, when the sailor had departed on his errand, the captain continued:

"Who was the young woman you brought aboard with you, this morning, Strovanoff? You see I was absent when you came aboard, and I only know about her from what I have been told."

"She is Olga Dovanief," was the calm reply.

"What?" exclaimed the captain.

"She is Olga Dovanief," Strovanoff repeated.

Again the captain indulged in that remarkable laugh of his, and he said when he had finished:

"Strikes me, Strovanoff, that this is rather a remarkable occurrence all through. Olga engaged passage with me yesterday about an hour after you had done so. She was particular to inquire if there were other passengers, and I told her the names of the three besides yourself, whom I expected; I didn't know that I was to have the honor of two such patriotic personages with me on such voyage. Where is she now? I would like to talk with her?"

"She has gone to her room," replied Strovanoff evasively. "She told me that she did not wish to be disturbed until after the ship had sailed. I think, captain, it would be best to leave her alone."

"Oh, very well," answered the captain, "as you please, but I wish you would tell her for me that as long as she is aboard the *Caucasia*, the entire ship is hers, and that if she has a wish ungratified she has only to express it to me."

"Thank you," said Strovanoff, and the captain, with a slight bow, left the room just as the sailors, returning with the others who had been sent for, brought the irons with which Patsy was to be manacled and afterward confined in the hold of the ship.

As the men stepped forward to lock the irons on his ankles and wrists, Patsy, who had been gathering his energies for the effort, made one heroic, but futile attempt to regain his liberty. He leaped to his feet with a suddenness that was a complete surprise to his enemies, who had thought him incapable of further resistance, and sent Strovanoff reeling across the cabin to the other side of it, with a blow of his fist; knocked one of the sailors senseless with a second blow, and made a jump for the door, hoping that he would be able to dash past it and jump into the water of the slip.

But one of the sailors stuck out a foot and tripped him, so that Patsy pitched forward head first against the door he had started to open, and fell to the floor half-dazed by the force of the impact.

Ten minutes later, with the ship's irons securely fastened to wrists and ankles, he was carried forward to a room in the second hold of the ship, where the iron door was securely barred on the outside, and into which the only light that penetrated came through a small port, that was no larger than his face.

He knew that this was the prison room of the ship, from which there was no hope of escape until he should be released, and with thoughts better to be imagined than described, he stretched himself upon the floor of it, so enraged at himself because of his own mistakes that had brought him to this pass, that he was barely capable of consecutive thought.

Just one thing that had occurred shone out promisingly in his memory, and that was embodied in the words that the captain had uttered in referring to Olga Dovanief as a passenger aboard his vessel.

Those words of the captain's had told Patsy plainly that if there was any sincerity in the man at all, he had expressed it in mentioning his regard for Olga; they told him also that the captain was utterly deceived in his own judgment about Strovanoff, and they told him moreover that it was the captain's belief that Olga was a willing passenger with Strovanoff on this voyage. Patsy believed that he saw some hope under these conditions, just as he saw hope also in the possible arrival of Nick Carter at the ship before she should sail at three o'clock that afternoon.

And he knew that when Nick Carter did reach the

ship and did not find Patsy there, according to his instructions, he would probably guess what had happened, and act accordingly.

And so, as Patsy considered things, he realized that although he had made a mess of it, there was by no means occasion for despair, for there were yet several hours before the *Caucasia* would sail on her long voyage.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHASING A SHIP OVERLAND.

Nick Carter made no discoveries at the house in Ryerson Street.

When he arrived there and rang the bell, the summons was answered immediately, as were the questions he asked at the door. Nothing could have been more innocent in its appearance, nor, indeed, in its character, so far as Nick Carter could discover, than that very house to which he knew Berger had gone that very morning.

But now, those who awaited the nihilist there had departed, and the place had once again taken upon itself its aspect of respectability, and it looked as it doubtless was, the home of a man who worked for his living and who returned there only at nightfall to sleep. It was a very easy matter for such a man and his family to provide a place of meeting for conspirators, and after those meetings had taken place, to destroy at once all outward evidence of their character. Nothing that the detective could elicit from the comely woman, who answered his summons, enlightened him, and when, at last, he descended the steps into the street, he was confident only of one fact, which was that Berger and his companions had left the house long before he arrived there himself, but whether or not Strovanoff had been there, or had taken Olga there, or had communicated with the men who had been at that meeting, he did not, and could not, ascertain.

The detective strolled slowly along as far as the station of the Second Avenue elevated road, undecided what to do. It was in his mind to return home, and it also occurred to him that it would be well to follow Patsy at once to the ship which was to sail that afternoon for Russia.

But Nick Carter was one who preferred not to interfere with the work of his assistants when once it had been allotted to any of them, and it seemed to him that if he were to follow Patsy at once to the ship, it would not only be an unnecessary waste of time, but would be like putting his eggs all in one basket.

There was no doubt at all in his mind that Strovanoff would attempt to leave the country at once and to take Olga with him, but since the man was aware that his conversation had been overheard, it seemed to Nick more than likely that he would leave New York by rail in order to sail for Europe from some other port.

On the other hand, there was no other place in the city where he could look for Strovanoff with any hope of discovering him, for he had no clue to direct him in his search, nor did he know where to look for one. The man had merely disappeared from the house in Forty-first Street before he was able to get to it. How the man had gone from the house, and in what manner he had induced Olga to accompany him, Nick did not know. All that he did know was that the man had left absolutely no clue behind him to serve the detective.

There was another reason why he did not regard it as wise to go at once to the ship. Freighters that take on their cargoes at the places like the Stores already mentioned, rarely, if ever, carry passengers, and are not visitd by strangers frequently enough to render such events commonplace, and the advent of Patsy upon that particular vessel that particular morning, would be sufficiently surprising of itself to the captain and crew, he thought, without adding to their wonder, and possibly alarming them, by the unnecessary appearance of a second person.

The result of all this was that Nick Carter went home, where he divested himself of the unnecessary disguise he had assumed, and calling Chick and Ten Ichi to him, sent them both out to scour the city in the Russian quarter for any possible information that might be obtained relative to Strovanoff or any of his followers. At last, after more than an hour, the detective, who disliked inaction more than anything else, started suddenly to his feet with the determination that no matter what the consequences might be, he would proceed to the ship at Martin's Stores, and, if necessary, force the captain to tell him whether or not he was to take passengers to sea that afternoon.

The consequence of this determination was that he crossed Fulton Ferry, and ran down through Furman Street, in Brooklyn, to the entrance to the Stores, pausing

only long enough to ascertain, in precisely the same manner that Patsy had done, the name and the location of the vessel he wished to find.

He looked at his watch somewhat absently as he started on again, and smiled approval of the discovery that it was only one o'clock—two hours yet before the time for the sailing of the ship; nevertheless, as he hurried forward, there was a premonition within him that something unpleasant was about to happen, and events proved that it was correct. As he ran out upon the pier the great iron ship had just swung itself clear from it and was proceeding into the river under its own power, gathering speed with each moment of time. For a moment, Nick did not believe this was the ship he sought, notwithstanding, that as the stern of the vessel moved past him, he plainly read the name: *Caucasia of Cronstadt.*

But for the moment he believed that he had been misinformed, for the conviction within him that the ship was not to sail until three was a settled one.

He ran forward to the end of the pier as fast as he could, eagerly scanning the faces and figures of the few persons he could see aboard the ship as it drew away from the wharf, hoping and fearing, both, that he would find Patsy there among them. Patsy, however, as the reader knows, was nowhere to be seen, and the fact that he was not in sight aboard the vessel, and had not been on the wharf at the moment of sailing, was conclusive evidence to Nick Carter, immediately, that if the *Caucasia* was the ship on which Strovanoff had spoken of sailing, Patsy's identity had been discovered and something had happened to him.

While the detective turned these things over in his mind, the ship was steadily increasing the distance between it and the end of the pier, and now, as it swung its prow toward the south and aimed its figurehead for the Narrows, a man came out through the door of the chart-room upon the deck and stood there for a moment, gazing toward the shore they were leaving.

Nick Carter saw him and recognized him, and he nearly exclaimed aloud as he did so; for the man was none other than Strovanoff, the nihilist.

The realization that Strovanoff was aboard the *Caucasia,* which had already left the dock, was to Nick Carter an instant revelation of all that had happened since he had parted with Patsy; not literally, of course, but in substance and effect.

He understood, now, that Strovanoff had stuck to his original intention and had sailed away on the ship he had talked about, and if Strovanoff were there, it was certain that he had Olga Dovanief with him, just as it was also certain that Patsy had somehow been recognized and had been overcome by the pretended nihilist chief and his friends. The detective knew that if Patsy had been able to do so he would have been either on the pier at the time of the departure of the ship or would have appeared at the rail of the vessel to wave the signal to Nick Carter if he should arrive; and it followed, therefore, that the young assistant was either confined in irons below, or had been disposed of in some other manner before the ship sailed.

The mere fact of the vessel's departure two hours before her time was an argument that something unexpected had happened to compel the captain to make haste; and now, as Nick turned and looked about him, he saw, what he had not before noticed, that there was considerable freight lying about the wharf in evident readiness to be put aboard the *Caucasia,* but which purposely had been left behind. The detective studied the vessel critically as she swung about to head for the Narrows, and he saw that she was a slow-moving freighter, incapable of any considerable speed. One never realizes how immeasurable is the distance between the wharf and a vessel that is leaving it, even when the actual space could be covered by a tape-line, until one stands upon a wharf under such conditions and wishes vainly to reach the vessel's side. The distance between the two, however short, seems almost as limitless as space, and continues to widen even at that, and there is a certain despair connected with a moment of that kind which must come to any one and every one under such circumstances. Nick Carter, however, recovered from this shock, which the realization of all that had happened brought to him almost at once, and he wheeled about and dashed back toward the street through the storehouses, determined that he would overtake and board that vessel before she passed out of the lower bay, if such a thing were within human possibility. He had, too, a very logical idea of how it might be done, if only his luck would stand by him sufficiently to enable him to find one of the Merritt & Chapman tugs at their station. There was, however, the chance that he might not find such a tug there when he should arrive, or if he did find one, that it would be a slow one, not capable of overtaking this vessel that had

just sailed away, for the old adage that "A stern chase is a long chase" was now literally confronting the detective.

He rushed out upon Furman Street and turned toward the ferry, realizing that, slow as it was, it nevertheless offered the quickest means of reaching New York, and to New York he was obliged to go in order to secure the tug upon which he hoped to chase the *Caucasia*.

But as he dashed into Fulton Street from Furman, he saw a gentleman just entering the tonneau of an automobile, whose engine had already been cranked by the chauffeur, who was also in the act of taking his seat. With sudden change of plan, the detective called aloud to the owner of the motor-car, and running to him, explained rapidly the predicament he was in and the necessity for haste under which he labored, concluding with this statement and request:

"If you have the time and will assist me, sir, your automobile can get me to Bay Ridge to one of the yacht-clubs there, far ahead of the time when that ship will pass through the Narrows, and with a swift launch, which I know I will be able to find at such a place, I will be able to overtake her. Will you do it for me?"

"You have neglected to tell me who you are," said the gentleman, smiling upon him.

"I am Nick Carter, the detective, and what I have told you is as true as gospel."

"Get in, Mr. Carter," said the gentleman, "I will see what can be done to serve you in your extremity."

CHAPTER IX.

COLONEL GRAVES OF THE ARMY.

We need not describe the flight of the automobile through the city, nor the plans which Nick Carter formed in his mind during the time that was thus occupied. It was an easy matter for the motor-car to beat the ship to the Narrows, and beyond them, and it would be comparatively easy to obtain the use of a launch of some description that would take him out upon the waters of the lower bay, where the ship might be intercepted, but it was still another thing to get aboard that ship, even if she were overtaken.

One of Nick Carter's characteristics, however, was to do whatever he thought to be the best under given conditions, and to trust to chance and opportunity to stand for him in any emergency that might occur. He had no very definite plan while he raced onward in the automobile, concerning how the big ship could be stopped while on the way to the sea, particularly since there was every reason why the people who were aboard of her, both as passengers and as crew, should wish to continue on their course without even slowing down. On the deck of his own ship, a captain is supreme, and this particular captain, having taken out his clearance papers from New York for Cronstadt, would be likely to permit nothing short of the authority of the United States Government itself to hold him up in the channel.

"The United States Government itself!"

Nick uttered the exclamation aloud, and the gentleman who sat beside him turned a smiling countenance in his direction and asked calmly:

"What about it, Mr. Carter?"

"I was thinking," replied Nick, "that the captain of the *Caucasia* will be a difficult proposition to hold up in the middle of the channel to the lower bay."

"I have been thinking of that since I first heard your story," was the quiet response.

"When I uttered that exclamation just now," continued the detective, "I was thinking that nothing short of government authority would have any effect upon the fellow."

"That idea also occurred to me, Mr. Carter."

"Well," said Nick, returning the smile, "I don't know how I'm going to obtain that authority in the short time I've got, and I have been wondering for the last few moments if there wasn't some way in which I could 'fake' it."

The man beside Nick laughed outright at this. Then he leaned forward and spoke a few whispered words to the chauffeur on the front seat, after which he settled back again, and, taking two cigars from his pocket, offered one of them to the detective, with the question:

"Do you smoke, Mr. Carter?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Then try one of these; you will find them good, I think."

When the cigars were lighted and the detective's expression had taken upon itself a settled frown of perplexity, for he was considering in his mind how he could assume the governmental authority he craved, the stranger beside him spoke again.

"Mr. Carter," he said, "you have neglected to ask my name."

"Pardon me," replied Nick, "I really don't believe I thought of it at all, or have considered how greatly I must be inconveniencing you in this matter. My mind has been fixed only upon other questions, as you may doubtless realize."

"Oh, yes," said the other, laughing. "My chauffeur is making pretty good time, don't you think so? I only hope he won't be held up by any of your city cops."

"I can fix that if he is," replied Nick. "But now that you have reminded me of it, won't you tell me who you are, sir?"

"In a moment, I will, certainly; but first, I would like to assure you that you are not inconveniencing me at all."

"No?" said Nick wonderingly.

"I was just about starting for Fort Hamilton when you called me and asked me to take you as a passenger."

"Really?" said the detective. "Then you are——"

"I think you are beginning to guess it," laughed his companion.

"Then you are an army officer?"

"Yes. At present detailed on inspection, and for the time being, stationed at Fort Hamilton."

"Glory Hallelujah!" exclaimed Nick, laughing now at his wonderful luck in having encountered this man. "That makes the whole thing easy, doesn't it?"

"I think so, Mr. Carter. I am Colonel Graves, and I wish to assure you that I will do everything in my power to assist you on this mission of yours, and I think I can find a way to do it."

"That's awfully good of you, colonel. There must be a launch of some sort there at the fort which can fly the Union Jack for us, and so give us the authority we want."

"Oh, yes," replied the colonel, "there is such a launch and she is very speedy. There will be no trouble in overtaking that ship with her whatever; the only question that arises is how to overcome the necessary red tape in order to make use of her."

"I know a way to overcome that, colonel."

"Do you, indeed? You seem full of expedients. How would you accomplish that very difficult proceeding?"

"Eh?" said Nick.

"I asked you how you would overcome the proverbial red tape of governmental officialdom?" smiled the colonel.

"I would break it," said Nick curtly.

Colonel Graves laughed aloud.

"Not a bad idea at all," he said, "I have often thought of doing that very same thing myself, but I have never quite dared to undertake it; to a man in my position it might prove a hazardous proceeding."

"Tell me," said Nick, "what would be the ordinary method of procuring the use of the launch you refer to? How much time would it take?"

"I will answer the last part of your question first, Mr. Carter. It would occupy us anywhere from one hour to five hours, depending upon whether or not we would find the commandant of the fort at his quarters, and if found there, if he happened to be in a conciliatory mood and not over-afflicted, as many of them are, with a disease that in the army is called 'redtapeitis.' In the present case, I am quite sure that we could not hope to leave the fort aboard the launch, with his authority, in less than two or three hours after we arrive, at the very best."

"Do you know where the launch is moored?" asked Nick.

"I certainly do."

"Do you know who is aboard of her?"

"Yes."

"I mean, have you personal acquaintance with the officer who is in command of the launch?"

"He happens to be one of my best friends, Ensign Morgan."

"He is a good fellow?"

"One of the best."

"Do you think that he would be inclined to help us?"

"I am sure that he would be very glad to do so if the doing of it did not place him in the uncompromising position of acting without authority."

"How many men has he got aboard the launch with him?"

"Two."

"Making three in all?"

"Yes."

"You said Ensign Morgan, didn't you?"

"I did."

"Then he is a naval officer; not an army officer, is he not?"

"Precisely. He is detailed for special duty to assist me while I am at Fort Hamilton."

"Do you mean," said Nick, "that if you were at the fort now, and found it your duty to go to Fort Hancock, that you could order Ensign Morgan to take you there without the necessity of red tape in starting?"

"I do."

"Then what's the matter with giving Morgan that very order? We can start for Fort Hancock on the launch, and after we get away from Fort Hamilton, we can change our course in order to intercept the *Caucasia*."

"I thought of that, too," said Colonel Graves slowly, and now speaking with great seriousness. "In fact, Mr. Carter, that is the only method that can be pursued by which you may hope to overtake the ship and bring it to a stop by the authority, or rather the apparent authority, of the government. And I would say to you, to do so, and do it in exactly that manner, were it not for the very grave consequences that might ensue if the captain of that ship you are pursuing is wise enough to enter a complaint through the consul-general at New York, or through any of the diplomatic channels he might use. If he should do such a thing as that, provided we stopped him, it would mean that Ensign Morgan, and myself as well, would be disgraced."

Nick Carter shook his head doubtfully.

"It's taking great chances, colonel," he murmured.

"I know it is," said Colonel Graves, "but I have thought about it deeply while we have been in this car together, and I have already decided that we will undertake it, at least to the point of making an attempt to stop the ship. At least, I will take you aboard the launch, introduce you to Morgan, and we will cast off and start ostensibly for Hancock; then when we are out upon the water, we will see what Morgan has to say about it."

"I think," said Nick grimly, "that we'll decide to break that red tape, colonel."

"I think so, too."

"And I further think," continued the detective, "that if the captain of that ship gets nasty and makes any threats about a diplomatic complaint, that I'll decide to break his head as well."

"A most excellent idea," laughed the colonel. "There is Fort Hamilton directly ahead of us. I have already told the chauffeur where to drop us. When we get down, follow me."

CHAPTER X.

A HOLD-UP DOWN THE BAY.

Nick Carter's almost proverbial luck stood by him that day.

When, with Colonel Graves, he leaped from the tonneau of the automobile and ran toward the wharf where the speedy launch was lying, the small craft was in perfect readiness to start at once, and Ensign Morgan was standing up straight, looking toward them exactly as if he had been in momentary expectation of their arrival.

There were officers at the fort who saw the arrival of Colonel Graves at the reservation, and who saw him and his companion rush toward the water—and it was for their benefit that the colonel called out to Morgan, ere he had reached the boat:

"Can you take us to Hancock as quickly as possible, ensign?"

"That I can," was the hearty response. "All aboard!"

Nick and the colonel lost no time in complying with this request, with the result that it was not three minutes after their arrival at Fort Hamilton, before they were speeding through the water at a speed of twelve knots an hour—and it was not until then that the colonel took time and occasion to introduce Nick Carter to the handsome young ensign.

"Mr. Morgan," he said then, "this is Mr. Nick Carter. I think you have heard of him."

"Not Nick Carter, the detective?" replied Morgan interrogatively.

"The same," said Nick, laughing; "and for the moment, engaged on a very important affair in which you can, if you will, be of great assistance to me."

"I?"

"Yes, you, Ensign Morgan."

"I think, Mr. Carter, that you may count upon my assistance to the last ditch, if the service that you require is within the length of my cable; in other words, if it is within the scope of my duty."

"I am afraid, Mr. Morgan, that it is not. That is, in fact, my present trouble."

The ensign looked grave. Then he turned his gaze inquiringly toward the colonel; and all the time the launch was pushing through the water with incredible speed for so small a craft.

The detective had already noticed that the launch was flying the necessary bunting for the expedition, if only Morgan could be brought to the point of consenting to

the plan—and for that he now depended almost wholly upon Colonel Graves.

The latter took up the discussion here, perceiving that Nick wished him to do so, and while the swift launch dashed onward, he explained all that had happened thus far, in his experience with the detective.

He began at the point where Nick had hailed him as he was getting into his car in Fulton Street, and detailed the conversation between them from that moment; and Morgan listened intently, without once offering an interruption; but Nick noticed that his countenance became almost severe as the story advanced.

When it was completed, he did not at once reply, but remained lost in thought, with knitted brows and stern visage, for a considerable time; but at last, as neither of the men offered to interrupt his thought, he turned to the detective.

"May I ask some questions, Mr. Carter?" he said.

"All that you care to ask, Mr. Morgan," was the instant reply.

"Is your anxiety concerning this affair, chiefly in consideration of the escaped prisoner whom you desire to recapture; or is your concern more in behalf of the young woman, who has been carried away against her will?"

Nick replied at once, and with perfect frankness:

"So far as I am concerned, the man Strovanoff can go hang. I have no personal interest in him whatever. As an escaped prisoner, it is up to the authorities to recapture him. I am not assigned to that duty, and it does not interest me at all."

"Then your real interest is in the woman?"

"Yes."

"Will you pardon me if I become rather personal in my questions?"

"I have already told you that you might ask whatever question you care to."

"Then may I ask the nature of your interest in the young woman? That sounds impertinent, I know; and possibly it is so; but——"

"My interest in the young woman is the same, Mr. Morgan, that any man who respects himself should feel in the fate of a good woman who stands in the worst danger that can threaten her. I am not in love with her, and she is not in love with me, if that is what you mean. She is almost a stranger to me. But she is a good woman, and she is in great danger."

"Thank you. Do you know, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that the danger does exist?"

"I certainly do know it."

"Have you considered the gravity of the situation in which the colonel and I will be put by pursuing the course you suggest?"

"We have both considered that."

"If your positions were reversed—if you were the naval officer, and I were the detective, and I had appealed to you as you have appealed to me, would you do for me as you are asking me to do for you?"

"That is hardly a fair question, because my answer would seem to be biased by the circumstances."

"Nevertheless, I would like to hear your answer."

"I certainly would do so, under such circumstances, if I appreciated the necessity for it, or could be made to do so, as thoroughly as I do now."

"Colonel, what have you to say, or suggest about it?"

"Morgan, I have promised myself that I would not interfere with you in your decision. You must make it for yourself."

"You realize, do you not, that if complaint were made against us through the proper channels, we would both be——"

"As literally in the same boat as we are at the present moment? Yes. I realize it."

"And yet you are here—with Mr. Carter."

"And yet I am here—with Mr. Carter."

"And your presence would argue——"

"According as you would have it appear. Pardon me, Morgan, but I do not care to have you influenced by any act of mine. I will state the case frankly to you. We are here, in a launch which belongs to the navy, and not to the army. You are in command of the launch, and are, therefore, my superior officer, for the time being. I am practically in the position of a civilian. But if we hold up that ship in the lower bay, and make use of the authority of the United States to do so, the consequences to me will be as great as to you, if there should be a fuss made about it. You are in uniform, but I am not; but, by jingo, if you happen to have an extra blouse and cap anywhere about, I'll join the navy for the time being, and serve under you."

The ensign smiled broadly.

"It seems to me that you have answered me," he said. "You approve of making the trial."

"Personally, I do."

"If you were in my place, would you consent?"

"Frankly, I would."

The ensign turned calmly to the detective.

"Mr. Carter," he said, "we will make the attempt."

"Thank you, old man!" exclaimed Nick heartily. "Really, I don't think there is the least danger that anything will come of it. I don't think it will occur to any of them to question our authority—and something that I have not said before, is this: That even if a fuss should be made about the affair, I think I know a way to head it off so that you would be praised for it in the end, rather than criticized."

The ensign shrugged his shoulders.

"We will make the attempt, no matter what comes of it," he said calmly. "Consider that point settled. I will tell you quite frankly, however, that I would not undertake it for anything less than a woman in distress. I would not do it for the sake of the recapture of the prisoner. I doubt if I would consent, even to rescue your friend whom you believe to be a prisoner aboard the ship now, but the case of the young woman is different. We will make the attempt. The question now arises, will the ship stop at our command?"

The detective shook his head in doubt.

"I don't know," he said.

"I very much doubt it," said the colonel.

"If the captain of the *Caucasia* merely laughs at us, and continues on his course to the sea, we will be helpless. We cannot stop him unless he chooses to stop."

"That is quite true. But I think," replied Nick, "that he will stop. He is a Russian, I have no doubt. He will doubtless figure it out that he will be followed to sea by a man-of-war, and be brought back here and made to suffer severely, if he refuses to stop at your order. It will not occur to him that the government is not behind you in your request. He will be frightened at what he has done. I think he will stop his ship and permit us to board it."

"We can at least make the attempt."

"The colonel and I will do the boarding, when he does stop," continued the detective. "You will remain in the launch, if you will consent to do so, and——"

"Wait a moment," interrupted Morgan. Then he turned again to the colonel and added: "Captain Gunn came down the bay with me yesterday, and I left him at the Crescent Club, where he had an engagement, and to which he had sent a change of clothing. The consequence was that he left his cap and uniform with me to take back to the fort. Colonel, you can put that on, and then call yourself by any name you please—call yourself Captain Jones, or Captain anything at all. If only we can make the fellow stop."

"I think he will do that," said Nick. "He will be frightened. He based all his hopes upon getting to sea before he was interfered with. The mere fact that he left the dock two hours before his time is proof of that."

"All the more reason why he may decline to stop."

"Well, we can make the effort, anyhow—*and there comes the ship.*"

Nick pointed toward the Narrows, and there they could all see the huge bulk of the vessel they had been talking about, lumbering along toward the channel, making for the open sea, her commander knowing that he had only to pass beyond the three-mile limit to be safe enough for the present, at least.

The colonel in the meantime had been busily engaged in donning the uniform of the captain, and now the ensign went forward, and presently brought out from one of the lockers a small brass cannon—a launch's cannon, used for salutes—which he proceeded to mount in its proper place at the bow.

It was a tiny breech-loader, and was soon in readiness for use, with a cartridge inside of it.

"We might as well do the thing up brown, if we do it at all," said the ensign grimly, and then, smiling broadly, "we will send a shot across his bows exactly as if we were a commissioned gunboat. Now, Mr. Carter, do you want a uniform, also?"

"No. There may be some sort of a scrap ahead of us, on board that ship—if we get aboard her, and if there is, I propose to do the most of it. And it will be better that a uniform doesn't figure in that part of the affair."

"I shall run directly in front of the ship, across her bows," said the ensign. "Then I will fire this little gun. He will understand what it means. Captain—I will call you captain for the rest of the day, I think—there is a blue peter in that locker behind you. Take it out and have it ready, and when I fire the gun, stand up and wave it at the ship. I think that will do the business."

After that there was silence between them until the position they sought was obtained.

Then the engine was stopped and the launch remained rolling upon the water until the huge ship was close

enough to observe them closely; and then the little gun boomed out, and the colonel leaped to his feet, waving the flag.

CHAPTER XI.

"BY COMMAND OF THE PRESIDENT."

It was at once evident that the launch had been observed from the deck of the ship for some time, for in addition to the pilot and the first officer of the vessel, upon the bridge, there were four other men there, evidently the captain himself, probably one of them was Strovanoff, and there were others as well.

For two or three moments after the firing of the small gun and the waving of the blue flag by the colonel, there was no cessation in the speed of the vessel, and no movement on the part of any of the men on the bridge to indicate that they intended to stop, but the detective and his friends could see several glasses leveled upon them, and it was rapidly becoming evident that the sight of uniforms of the United States, in the launch, was having its effect.

In the meantime the ensign had slipped a second cartridge into the gun, and now he fired again, after which he also leaped to his feet and waved another flag which he had taken from a locker.

But the huge ship kept on its course with undiminished speed, until it seemed certain that the tiny craft would be run down and sunk.

This danger became so imminent that Nick was several times on the point of leaping to the crank to start the engine in order to get out of the way, but a glance at the stern, set face of the young ensign reassured him; told him that the naval officer had thoroughly calculated what he was doing.

When the vessel was almost upon them; when it seemed certain that they would be run down and sunk, and when, notwithstanding this fact, the ensign made no move to start the engine to get out of the way, they all saw the captain of the ship leap toward his telegraph signal on the bridge and work it with great rapidity—and instantly they were aware that the engines of the ship had been reversed, and that her propeller was going at full speed backward.

And then—and not till then—the ensign sprang to his own engine and started it, so that they just barely glided out of the way in time.

But even as that happened—even as the huge bulk of the ship slid past them, Colonel Graves lifted up his voice and shouted:

"By command of the President of the United States of America, I order you to stop and to permit me to board you. Refuse at your peril."

There was visible consternation among those who were on the bridge of the vessel.

Nick saw and recognized Strovanoff; he saw the man spring toward the captain and expostulate with him; he saw the captain shake his head. Then Strovanoff seemed to threaten, and Nick saw the captain raise his right hand as if to strike the Russian nihilist, but he dropped the arm without delivering the blow; and then he called out to the launch, which had in the meantime come about and was now keeping pace with the ship, abeam of the bridge.

"What do you want?" he demanded; and Colonel Graves glanced toward Nick Carter; but Nick exclaimed quickly, and in a low voice:

"You do the talking, colonel. Go on!"

"We have orders to board you, captain," replied the colonel.

"By whose authority, sir?" demanded the captain.

"By the authority of the United States Government. Defy it at your peril."

"Why do you wish to come aboard? This is a ship——"

"You will be informed respecting that matter, when you have complied with the President's order," was the stern reply.

At this juncture Strovanoff again rushed toward the captain on the bridge, but the latter raised his arm threateningly again, and then signed to two of his men to seize upon the nihilist and hold him. Then he called again to the launch.

"Do you intend to hold me, personally, or to keep my ship from going to sea?" he asked; and Colonel Graves replied:

"We shall not molest you, or your ship, unless you refuse to obey the order I have transmitted to you. You will be permitted to proceed on your course, unmolested, if you are reasonable. But if you defy the authority of the United States, your ship will be ordered back to its dock, in the city, and if you refuse to obey, a cruiser will be sent after you to bring you back. That is my last word. Put a ladder over the side and permit me to come aboard."

The huge vessel, as well as the launch, were now at a standstill—that is, as much so as was possible under the circumstances.

For just one moment after that last remark, the captain still hesitated; but then, as if convinced that he must obey, he said something hastily to Strovanoff, and then shouted out his orders, directing that the rope ladder be lowered over the side and a line cast to the launch at the same time.

"We win!" remarked the ensign, in an undertone.

"You bet!" replied the detective.

"I wonder what the captain said to that fellow who twice tried to attack him," muttered Colonel Graves. "I am wondering if the fellow contemplates any treachery."

"Hardly that, I think," said the detective. "That fellow to whom he spoke is Strovanoff, the escaped prisoner. I think the captain would throw him into the water rather than have his ship delayed. Will you ascend the ladder first, colonel? The fact that you did the talking, and that you wear a uniform, makes that rather necessary."

"Yes. I will do that. Shall you go with me?"

"You bet I will."

"And I shall go, also," said Morgan sternly. "I have entered into this thing, and I propose to see it through, now that I am in it. Two uniforms on that deck will serve better than one. My men can take charge of the launch."

The detective offered no objection; and then as the men in the launch caught the line that was thrown to them, and the end of a rope ladder was dropped over the side of the black hull, they all made ready to mount to the deck of the ship.

"Strovanoff will fight, if he has half a chance," said the detective, as the colonel was about to begin the ascent. "But if he does so, leave him to me. My only fear is that he will make use of this interval to do some injury to Olga."

"Let us hope not," remarked the colonel fervently; and then he began the ascent to the deck.

Nick Carter followed close behind him; and after him came Ensign Morgan, with his young face set in hard lines, for now that he was embarked in the enterprise, he entered upon it with all his heart and soul.

When the colonel stepped from the ladder upon the deck, Nick was directly behind him, and they found that they were confronted by the captain of the ship and his first and second officers, one on either side of him; and their faces were scowling and dissatisfied with the whole proceeding.

It was plain to Nick that the captain was greatly troubled, and that even now he was in doubt in his own mind if it would not have been better for him to have continued on his course and taken the consequences.

But when the ensign followed the detective to the deck, and when he was confronted by two uniforms of the United States, one of the army and the other of the navy, the captain became all servility at once, for he seemed to realize that he was "in for it" unless he could in some manner squirm out of the responsibility for what had occurred.

"Well, sir?" he demanded, addressing the colonel, as the one who had compelled him to stop his ship.

But now Colonel Graves turned to Nick Carter, and bowed profoundly.

"State your case, sir," he said, "and know that I will uphold you in all things, and that the authority of the United States is behind you. State your case, sir."

It could not have been done better had they been on dress parade, and the captain of the ship was visibly affected by the ceremoniousness of it. He turned to Nick inquiringly, and waited silently for him to speak.

"Captain," said the detective slowly, and selecting his words with great care, "you have, on board this ship, and are holding as a prisoner, an American citizen—Garvan by name. I am here to demand his instant release."

"And if I deny that such is the case, and if my officers bear me out in that statement—what then?" demanded the captain, in return.

"Then," replied Nick, "you will be ordered to return to port in order that your ship may be searched by officers of the army of the United States, for we happen to know that the man is here, so your denial would be useless."

"If I admit that the man is here—what then?" asked the captain guardedly. It was evident that he was still of two minds whether to throw these intruders into the sea and take his chances.

"I demand that you instantly release him and deliver him to this officer," replied Nick, indicating Colonel Graves with a wave of his hand.

"If I do that, will I be permitted to proceed with my ship at once, without further trouble?" asked the captain.

"There are other things that you must do as well, sir."

"What are they?"

"You have also aboard the ship a man named Strovanoff, who has broken the laws of the United States, and is an escaped prisoner. He is a Russian citizen, I have no doubt, but he is, nevertheless, an escaped prisoner of the United States. I demand that you also produce him."

"I can do that easily enough, for he is here. But I claim that you have no right to him. He is now outside the authority of your government. He is under the Russian flag, and you cannot take him from me."

"Possibly not; but I can force you to return to port with me, to explain before the court by what authority you assist him in his attempt to escape; and that I will do. Don't forget, captain, that in carrying away by force an American citizen, as you have done in the case of Garvan, you have committed a grave error which you must answer for unless you agree to all the conditions I make."

"And in that case, if I do agree—what then?"

"You will be permitted to proceed."

"Then state your conditions, and let us have done with this thing. Just what do you want?"

"You have also among your passengers a young woman named Olga Dovanief. I demand that you bring her before this officer at once."

"She is not an escaped prisoner."

"No."

"And she is a citizen of Russia."

"Yes."

"By what authority, then, do you demand that she be produced?"

"By her own. She was brought aboard this ship by Strovanoff against her will, and——"

"What's that?"

"You heard me."

"If I thought that, by Heaven, I'd——"

"Let her answer for herself. I am content to abide by what she says. If she wishes to return to New York with this officer, or with me, she must be permitted to do so. If she prefers to continue the voyage with you, she may do so. That is fair, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then give the necessary orders. When the three I have named are produced—well, you may continue your voyage, and I can promise you that your part of the affair shall be forgotten. Refuse, and—take the consequences."

For a moment the captain stared into Nick's eyes, as if he was calculating upon what he should do. And then he wheeled abruptly, and called out half a dozen sharp orders in Russian, while men from all sides sprang to obey him; and again Nick heard Ensign Morgan murmur:

"We win!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

There was a wait of a few moments after that, but it was presently interrupted by the appearance of Patsy, who was led forward between two men, until he came within sight of Nick Carter, when he quickly broke away from them and dashed forward to his chief's side. The irons had been struck off his hands and he was free; but he knew the ship had left port, and he had no idea why he was taken to the deck until he saw his chief standing there with the uniformed men on either side of him.

But when Patsy also discovered the captain, whom he blamed for all that had happened to him, his temper, never of the best, got the upper hand of him instantly.

He rushed at the master of the ship as if he meant to annihilate him, and he would have struck him in the face, and possibly spoiled all that had been accomplished, had not Nick Carter interposed his own person in the way at once.

He seized Patsy, and as he whirled him around behind him, said sternly:

"Stand there, and don't move or speak until you have permission;" and the young assistant instantly realized that everything on that deck was not exactly as it appeared to be, and that he had almost made another fatal mistake in his day's work.

Again they waited in silence for the others to appear; and then they were all startled by the sound of a pistol-shot from below.

As if by common consent, Nick and the ensign started forward together, toward the sound of the shot, but they had not taken half a dozen steps, ere Olga Dovanief herself dashed through a doorway, out upon the deck, closely pursued by Strovanoff, who was gesticulating with a smoking pistol and firing it as he ran.

But his excitement and his rage interfered with his

aim; at least it is certain that not one of his bullets took effect; and just as they emerged, Strovanoff tripped upon a coil of rope and fell sprawling on his face.

But even as he did so, he seemed to have sense enough left to him to know that he had played his last card, for before anybody could get to him to make him a prisoner, he had turned the weapon upon himself and pulled the trigger.

The great Strovanoff, traitor to his country, and also traitor to the enemies of it, was dead, instantly, by his own hand.

He did not utter a word after he shot himself, but was quite dead when they rolled him over upon the deck.

In the meantime, Olga Dovanief had done an amazing thing—so amazing that even Nick Carter, on turning away from the body of the fallen Strovanoff, stared in surprise at what he saw.

Olga, in rushing forward to escape from Strovanoff, had leaped almost into the arms of Ensign Morgan—only she had seen him before she was quite in his grasp, and had stopped as abruptly as if one of Strovanoff's bullets had hit her.

For an instant she stared at him—for that same instant they stared upon each other, and then with a glad cry that was heard all over the ship, she flung herself forward straight into his arms, and was received there exactly as if Ensign Morgan had gone out to the ship that day for the sole purpose of finding her.

And instantly the two became oblivious to their surroundings, whispering things excitedly into each other's ears, and otherwise comporting themselves as if they were the only living persons in the world.

Morgan's arms were around her, and he was kissing her rapturously, while she returned the embraces and the kisses as well, when Nick Carter turned and saw them.

Instantly she tore herself away from the embrace of the young naval officer, when she perceived that Nick Carter's eyes were upon her, and she drew back blushingly, just as Morgan thrust himself forward and seized the detective by both hands.

"Thank you! Thank you! You have made the world all over again for me this day!" he cried out.

"Have I?" replied Nick, shaking himself loose from the grasp. "Would you mind telling me what it all means? Is it a case of love at sight? I have heard of such things, but I never saw it quite so perfectly demonstrated before."

"It was love at first sight," admitted Morgan, "but that first sight happened three years ago, when I was aboard the *Maine* and we were lying at Cronstadt."

"But you have known all the time that it was Olga Dovanief who was aboard this ship, and whom I wished to rescue, Morgan," said Nick.

And here Olga herself interposed.

She stepped forward quickly toward the detective, and before he could dodge her, kissed him upon the cheek.

"I thank you, too," she exclaimed, "and I will explain. Mr. Morgan knew me as Olga Orloff—my mother's name, you know, Mr. Carter. He never knew that my name was Dovanief; and—we loved each other. Then he was called away; and then, also, I had duties to perform. We parted, and since then we have lost each other—until now."

"And I want to tell you, Carter," interrupted Morgan; "that when you told your story to me to-day, it was the mention of the name Olga that decided me. I remembered *my* Olga, although, of course, I did not associate the two together. But the mere name of Olga was sufficient."

"Olga," said the detective, "stand back a little, for a moment. I wonder if you can be prevailed upon to talk sense for a moment."

"I'll try, Mr. Carter."

"I have given my word to the captain, here, that you should answer two questions for him. Are you ready to do so?"

"Quite," she said. "The captain and I are old acquaintances. If I could have seen him when I was brought aboard the ship, I would not be here now—and I am glad that I did not see him then," she added, in an undertone, to Morgan.

"That seems to answer one of the questions; but I will ask them formally, just the same," said the detective. "Do you think that you are sufficiently recovered from your recent emotions to reply to them, Olga?"

"I think so," she answered, blushing and smiling Everybody seemed to have forgotten the dead Strovanoff, whose body had already been carried away by the sailors, in response to an order of the captain's.

"First, then," continued the detective, "were you brought aboard this ship, by Strovanoff, against your will?"

"I was. I had already engaged passage with the captain, but I did not know that Strovanoff was to be a

passenger; nor did he, I think, else he would have told me about it."

"That I would," said the captain.

"Strovanoff compelled me to come here with him. He held a dagger ready to stab me with it until I was locked in my room. I submitted, apparently without a struggle, for the reason that I knew as soon as I could get speech with the captain, he would protect me. Strovanoff did not know that, and as long as he kept away from my room I was willing to remain silent, knowing that sooner or later the captain must learn I was on board.

"And then, a few moments ago, Strovanoff rushed down to my berth like a madman, for he had the key to the door. He threw it open and tried to kill me, but I broke away from him and rushed to the deck. The rest, you know."

"The second question," said Nick, "is this: Do you desire to return to New York, or do you prefer to continue the voyage? Answer that one, if you please."

"I think," replied Olga slowly, turning her matchless eyes upon Ensign Morgan, who stood beside her—"I think I will ask Mr. Morgan to answer that question for me."

"I'll answer it all right, you bet!" exclaimed Morgan. "The answer is this: You do wish to return to New York; you do *not* wish to continue the voyage, and with my consent, you will never put your feet inside the Empire of Russia again, so long as you live."

"Do you agree to that answer, Olga?" asked Nick.

"Quite so, Mr. Carter. I agree with it, perfectly."

"Captain," said the detective, turning to the commander of the ship, "are you satisfied with those answers?"

"I am, sir; and now, may I continue my voyage to sea?"

"With all my good wishes, captain—if you will dispose of the body of the suicide."

"I'll do that, all right. It is a good thing for himself that he saved me the trouble, for—well, if I had known then what I know now, Strovanoff would have been a dead man before you came to get him. That's my answer."

"Chief," said Patsy, thrusting himself forward at this moment, "may I say a word now?"

"Yes, Patsy, say it."

"I want to speak to the captain."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Captain," said Patsy, stepping directly in front of that officer, "some day you will be cruising around the streets of little old New York again, and when you do that, if you happen to run afoul of me, I'm going to give myself the delight of punching your head for you for the trick you played on me; but in the meantime, I guess you're better than you look, so if you don't mind, we'll shake hands until we meet again. *There!* That's off my mind!"

"Good!" said Nick. The captain laughed, and shook hands heartily with Patsy.

"I hope you'll forgive me," he said. "I'll look you up when I am in New York again."

"I think that is all," said Nick. "We will get ashore now."

"But there are two more passengers aboard the ship whom you might wish to see, chief," said Patsy.

"No," remarked the captain. "They didn't show up. We sailed ahead of time, and they did not appear. Anyhow, they would not have interested you. They had nothing to do with Strovanoff, and were unknown to him."

He thanked Nick Carter, and the colonel, and also the ensign, profusely, for permitting him to proceed on his way without further molestation; and so the launch was presently speeding toward the shore again, with its mission accomplished, and without the United States officers feeling any fear that their escapade would ever be inquired about.

We have only to add that one week to a day afterward, Nick Carter attended the wedding of Olga and Ensign Morgan, the latter having obtained an extended shore leave as a wedding present from the secretary of the navy.

That same night that Olga was rescued, Nick called at the house in Forty-first Street and found Berger; and he said to him:

"Berger, this is a big country, but it is too small for you. Leave it at once and take your plotters with you, and you will avoid trouble; stay, and I will make it so hot for you that you will wish you had taken my advice."

Berger went.

THE END.

The next number (562) of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will contain, besides the usual departments, a long, complete story entitled, "A White House Mystery; or, Nick Carter's Case for the President."

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

Up to-day and for many years mahogany has been the most highly prized wood by those who admire fine furniture. Mahogany is a rare and very expensive wood, and is much imitated. In color it is a rich, warm, reddish brown, with beautiful age marks; and there is also a white mahogany which is even more rare, but hardly so beautiful.

Mahogany is so much in demand that furniture-makers gladly buy old mahogany logs and furniture. It is a wood that improves in color with seasoning and age, and it can always be remade into the finest carved articles.

Most of the mahogany used in this country comes from Nicaragua, and the vast forests there are said to be largely controlled by rich Boston merchants. The business of harvesting the lumber, so to speak, is a vast enterprise, and one that is carried on with great difficulty. Steamships and schooners carry the mahogany to this country in cargoes of from 200,000 to 500,000 feet each.

In Nicaragua from 1,000 to 1,500 natives are employed as lumbermen, and they work under the direction of American superintendents. Mahogany trees vary in quality, and to be valuable for furniture-makers they must range in age from 25 years to 40, or thereabouts, although some trees 75 years of age are cut down. The trees most in demand average 25 inches or more in diameter, but they are frequently as large as 40 inches. A wise rule is practised in order to render the supply inexhaustible. The rule is that every time a tree is cut down two must be planted.

Mahogany loggers have eventful lives. The South American natives are the only ones who can stand the work of these lumber-camps. The natives live on a great variety of food, for the rivers teem with fish, the woods with rare tropical fruits, and according to a United States consular report the lumbermen are not adverse to a dish of roasted stuffed monkey, something that would hardly be a favorite with American boys and girls.

The lumbering season is irregular, beginning with dry weather on or about December 1. The tree is first cut down and then sawed into proper lengths. After that it is hauled to the nearest river, and then the logs are made into a raft, which is poled or towed to the nearest coast. Often the logs have to be hauled by teams distances of from one to six miles. Sometimes this journey requires two days of the hardest work, for the roads would scarcely do for bicycles, as they consist of paths through dangerous snake-inhabited swamps and morasses. American horses could never stand such terrible work, and the poor animals that are compelled to undertake such hard labor have hard lives indeed.

We give the following particulars of the breaking away from jail of a gang of prisoners, which once occurred at Toledo, Ohio, the feat being one of the funniest on record.

The trick was as ingenious as it was successful. Seven men, at least, if not more, got inside a disused chimney, and made a human pyramid of themselves, so that one of them should be able to reach the top.

With a bit of iron wire taken from the edge of a tin dish, one of the men picked the locks of a good many of the cell doors, and invited the tenants to come out, either for good, or just for a blow. As many prisoners as cared either for temporary or permanent liberty were then let out of their cells. Some of them helped the more determined ones to escape, while others ascended to the roof, and watched them out of sight.

More of the prisoners would have escaped had not a colored boy seen a man peep over the edge of the roof, and gave the alarm. That man was a child of procrastination. When his escaped fellow prisoners gave him the option of staying within or going without the prison-walls he said he didn't want to escape. Shortly afterward he changed his mind, and climbed to the top of the chimney, like the others. But, seeing that he would have to slide down a lightning-rod, he thought he'd better go back to his cell. He did. A few moments of private reflection, and his spirit urged him on to try to make his escape after the others. So he climbed up to the chimney-top, and got down onto the roof, where he was seen by the boy.

The warders, being aroused now, waited below for him, and persuaded him to drop into their arms; but he wouldn't. They then asked him to go down the chimney again; but he wouldn't do that, either. They then threatened to shoot him if he didn't do one thing or the other, so he dropped down behind the coping of the roof, and shouted.

The warders consulted among themselves, and decided to call out the fire-brigade. A scaling-ladder was run up against the wall, and the man descended it quite leisurely.

It seems to have taken little time for the seven men to make their plans for escape. All these men formed a certain gang who worked together in their nefarious schemes outside, which consisted mainly of robbing. They were in prison now for a daring post-office robbery.

Two of the prisoners were placed together in one fairly large cell, with a disused fireplace in it, but bars had been put across, to prevent escape by means of the chimney. One of the bars had got loosened somehow, and that gave the man the cue for releasing the others, which was done expeditiously. They also noticed that a bad job of riveting had been done on one of the bolts that held the padlock-staple of their cell, and, of course, the two made that bad job much worse before very long. These two, at an opportune moment in the early morning, got out, and then picked the locks of their comrades' cells, as already described. An adjournment was then made by all to the cell, presumably

in the occupation of the two leaders, and there and then the initial attempt to get out was made.

The thinnest man was sent up the perfectly straight chimney, but he quickly returned to tell the tale that it couldn't be done in that way. After a hurried council among the seven, they then picked the locks of the other cells, and requisitioned the liberated prisoners' sheets, which were cut up into long strips. They also annexed a bit of rope they found, so that out of all the remnants they managed to manufacture a sturdy long rope.

The thing now was to get one end to the top of the chimney. Man by man they built a regular human pyramid, until the top fellow was able to reach the bars that projected over the mouth of the stack. All these were removed except one, to which was affixed the rope end. The top man then climbed up to the coping, and assisted the next man up, and so on. The more lithesome of the crew slid down the lightning-rod onto the roof first, a distance of fifteen feet; then the heavier men followed. Once on the roof their getting down to terra firma was the work but of a moment. They scrambled over the coping, and slid down the wall by means of a stout water-pipe until they reached a second roof, which was only ten feet from the ground.

There is some diversity of opinion as to what constitutes the devil-fish, some contending that the huge octopus is the devil-fish, but in the United States, and especially along the Gulf coast, the devil-fish is an entirely different creature.

Around on the Gulf coast what is known as the devil-fish belongs to the ray family, and attains enormous proportions, and very few of them have been caught. Their appearance in the water would readily suggest the name of devil-fish, for they swim near the surface, with mouth wide-open, and extending across the entire width of the head.

A large mouth will easily measure from two to three feet across, and, being open and feeding, gives the creature a formidable appearance. Moreover, he has a large flipper on either side of his mouth, which is in constant motion, and is intended, no doubt, to bring food into his mouth.

One of these monsters was caught at Tarpon, which is on Mustang Island, off the coast of Texas, about fifteen miles from Rockport. A body of men were out fishing at Aransas Pass, where the government jetty extends for nearly two miles into the Gulf, and six or eight of these immense fish were swimming beyond the end of the jetty. Some of us tried to hook them, and one or two succeeded, but, of course, it was like tying an elephant with a piece of thread. They swam close around our boats, but evidently meant no harm. One little scene, however, that happened about this time was very amusing.

A fisherman succeeded in throwing his hook, or line, across the back of one of those fish, when it turned, and went directly for his boat. He did not know whether he was going to be eaten up, drowned, or turned over, and he jumped up, prepared for eventualities, while those around and looking on stood in wonder to see what was going to happen, but the monster quietly glided under the boat and out on the other side, and went away, doing no harm, and so ended our first day's interview with him.

Next day when we started out, we were provided with a harpoon, so that if we met any of the huge fish again we would be ready to receive them. We went out to the end of the jetty, perhaps sixteen of us, and were fishing for tarpon. I was the farthest out, and saw one of those fish swimming about, and immediately called to the boat with the harpoon. The boatman, a strong, powerful man, named Kline, came up with his comrade, another boatman, named Farley. I showed them where the fish was, and went with them.

After looking around a little while, we came across him again, and Kline got close enough to strike, driving the harpoon deep and in the center of his back.

There was now a terrible splashing and beating of the water, and the huge monster dived, and went off at a lively pace. I followed the man in my skiff as rapidly as possible, and as the fish made a turn, retracing his course, I threw a rope into Kline's boat, which was made fast.

The monster hauled us directly toward the jetty. The other boats, seeing mine attached, came up, and the foremost threw a line into my boat, which was made fast, and so they did one after another, until the entire fishing-fleet was attached.

And now, making a turn, the monster struck out for the Gulf, hauling our boats, sixteen in number, at a lively pace. However, after a while, he changed his mind, and started back toward the jetty; and then doubled on his track, and struck for the center of our fleet; and it looked like there was trouble ahead; but by lifting the ropes, the boats did not collide, but followed him, turning on themselves.

Then the fish struck out for a buoy, and was running so close that I had to have my line loosed, thus cutting loose the remainder of the boats.

With one boat only attached, the huge ray made a lightninglike dash for the Gulf again, carrying the single boat still fastened to him by the harpoon at an exceedingly rapid pace; but he turned again, and I succeeded in lashing my boat to the first boat a second time, the other boats following, until we again formed a line in the wake of the monster fish; then he took up from the jetty several miles parallel with St. Joseph's Island, and again struck for the Gulf.

But now, recognizing that we could do nothing with him, and that he seemed as fresh as when we first fastened to him, we sent for help, and Mr. Cotter, who keeps the inn, came out in a launch with another harpoon and a rifle. He anchored his launch, got into one of the skiffs, and maneuvered around where Mr. Kline was, and as the fish came to the surface again drove the harpoon well into him.

Then there was a terrible churning up of the water; but after a little while the fish came to the surface again, when Mr. Cotter fired, striking him with a rifle-bullet in some vital place. Altogether ten shots were fired into him, the fish in the meantime splashing and struggling in the water, now reddened with his blood; but he was evidently very much exhausted.

Cotter then fastened a large shark-hook with a heavy rope to the fish, and with all three ropes we fastened him to the launch, and then started in for Tarpon.

The necessity for the three fastenings was evident. Before reaching Tarpon, two of the ropes broke on the way in, but we finally landed him.

And as to his weight, I cannot say positively, but we estimated it at two thousand pounds. And from the crowd of

men and boys it took to get him ashore that would appear to be a low estimate. In actual measurement he was twelve feet across and seventeen and a half feet from tip to tip.

While he belongs to the ray family, he is not a sting-ray, as some who had seen him announced; for I possess his tail, and there is no sting attached to it.

The Eskimos are dependent upon the sea for everything they eat and for all the clothes they wear, but none of them know how to swim. This seems strange at first, but becomes less mysterious when we take into account the fact that in the Arctic Ocean the temperature of the water is never above the freezing-point. The natives of that region guard against the danger of drowning by making the covering of their boats so tight about the body of the fisherman that there is no leakage, even if they do happen to overturn.

When the *Kite* was in McCormick Bay with the party of Lieutenant Peary, one of the crew took a swim, which is described by Doctor Keely:

"One of the men declared that the water looked so pleasant that he would swim from the ship to the shore and back again. Those who heard the assertion attempted to dissuade him, pointing to the numerous icebergs which floated about in every direction. Even when he stripped, we all thought that a single plunge would serve to make him change his mind.

"Meanwhile a crowd of curious natives had gathered round, and were gazing at him in mild astonishment. Finally he took the plunge, and at once started, swimming vigorously for the shore.

"Alarmed for his safety, and fearing that a cramp might overtake him, I jumped into a little boat, which was moored alongside the ship, and followed him, being prepared to render assistance, if it were needed. He reached the shore in safety, however, and, turning resolutely round, swam back to the vessel, a distance of about two hundred yards.

"He received, of course, an ovation, but was almost at once taken with a chill, which at one time looked serious. A vigorous rubbing restored his circulation to its normal condition, and a brief rest made him as well as ever. It was regarded, however, as a foolhardy feat, and one that none were anxious to emulate.

"The effect on the natives of a sight of the swimming man was most curious. They regarded him with constantly growing astonishment. In Greenland, the only use they know for water is for drinking-purposes. Probably many of them had accidentally fallen into the water, but they dread and hate its effects as much as a cat does."

ALMOST A MURDER.

BY GLENDOWER.

An advertisement appeared in one of the daily papers, about a month ago, stating that a single gentleman might secure comfortably furnished rooms, with partial board, by applying at a certain house in H—— Street, Brooklyn, near the Fulton Ferry. The only applicant was a stout, dark-complexioned man, with restless black eyes, and a countenance of sinister expression. Mrs. Gilmore did not exactly like his appearance, which indicated excessive dissipation; but, thinking she might be mistaken in her opinion, as he was a man of good address, rather than have the rooms untenanted, she resolved to let the stranger have them. Mrs. Gilmore told him that she was a widow, with two grown daughters and a son—a young man twenty-four years of age; that the latter had lately secured a situation in Albany, and she thought it useless to occupy so much room, as he was absent, and so decided to take in a boarder until his return.

Everything being arranged, the stranger took possession by moving in a very large, mysterious-looking trunk, having on it the remains of about twelve express company tickets, which adhered when the owner had perhaps hurriedly attempted to tear them off. This suggested to Mrs. Gilmore that the stranger was in the habit of roaming from place to place; and this fact, together with the request made shortly after moving in, that he should not be disturbed while in his apartments, as he preferred solitude, rather increased the lady's unfavorable opinion of her boarder. Still, she reasoned with herself, thinking that Mr. T. might be suffering from some calamity—perhaps the death of a near friend or relative.

For the first two or three days nothing strange was noticed in the conduct of Mr. T., excepting alone his aversion to conversation with Mrs. Gilmore or her daughters. All their attempts to draw him into a friendly chat seemed unavailing; and as he only took breakfast in the house, and that usually at a later hour than the family, immediately thereafter starting for New York, and not returning until a late hour, the occasions for conversation with him were both short and unfrequent.

The first Saturday after his installation in the house, Mrs. Gilmore noticed, when he came to breakfast, that his features bore a care-worn expression; and, as it was about two o'clock that morning when she heard him entering the house, her previous fears began to be confirmed, and she thought her suspicions were well grounded when she observed his averted looks and abstracted mutterings.

She whispered her fears to her daughters, and their unanimous opinion was that Mr. T. gained a livelihood by some dishonorable means—that he was a burglar, or, perhaps, something worse.

What was to be done? They wanted to get him out of the house; but if they mentioned their suspicions as a pretext for removing him, he might mercilessly slaughter them to prevent detection.

As long as Mr. T. remained ignorant of their suspicions, the ladies inferred that no immediate personal danger need be apprehended; but still the utmost precaution was necessary, and to prevent a robbery they safely locked up all their valuables in a closet of their sleeping-apartment. Then the younger daughter hurried off to the telegraph-office, and despatched a telegram to her brother to the following effect:

"ROBERT: Come home as soon as possible! Delay not a moment."

As usual, the boarder left for New York when he had finished his morning meal; and during his absence Mrs. Gilmore and her daughters felt considerably relieved, although when night arrived they made up their minds to sit quietly in their sleeping-apartment, as sleep was out of the question when such a man as Mr. T. was expected every moment, who perhaps intended to rob them that very night, and, to be successful, and hide all evidence of his guilt, might murder three defenseless females in cold blood.

Mrs. Gilmore's son had by this time received the telegraphic despatch, and was doubtless on his way home by the evening train. Perhaps he would arrive home before Mr. T.; and this thought inspired them with courage.

The night passed slowly to those three terrified females, as they sat impatiently awaiting the arrival of their relative. What if Mr. T. should arrive first! Oh, horror! 'Tis now near midnight. Hark! A footstep is heard approaching! The traveler ascends the stoop!

"Heaven grant that it may be my son! No, no; it is not Robert; that step is too stealthy! Calm yourselves, my children; we may yet be saved!"

The hall door is opened, and with almost noiseless footsteps the boarder reaches his room on the second floor, unlocks the door, and, having entered and placed the key on the inside, relocks it.

This last action convinces the listening females that no immediate danger is to be feared. But presently they hear him walking up and down the room and stamping his feet.

With tremulous steps the younger daughter leaves her chamber, and descends the first few steps of the staircase, taking her position on that part directly opposite the door leading to the apartment of the mysterious man. The mother and elder daughter follow her example, and soon all three are on the staircase, eager to fathom the cause of the strange sounds which strike terror to their hearts.

Suddenly the voice of the stranger, in subdued tones, is added to the noise made by his stamping.

"One more life! Then all my enemies will be at rest. Six have I slain; but yet one remains! He—the haughty judge, who spurned me after I had made him what he is—he dies to-night!"

"Oh, heavens!" whispered Mrs. Gilmore to her daughters, as she grasped the banister to sustain herself, "the wretch is a murderer!"

"Mother, mother, calm yourself," answered the younger daughter, in low tones. "Let us leave the house, or we are lost. We can do so without being observed; and once on the street we may then give the alarm. Should he catch us listening, our lives——"

The last part of the sentence was abruptly terminated by the females hearing the continuation of the soliloquy of the strange man:

"Oh, that I had the power to make him undergo the torture of ten thousand lives. E'en then my revenge would be unsatisfied! What—ho! Roderick, bring me some wine! My brain is racked and I must quench the burning at my heart."

"Mother, mother! he has an accomplice with him!" faintly ejaculated the elder daughter.

"Wine, I say! Will that rascal never come?" The speaker accompanied the last remarks with violent stamping, and then continued his musings. "Ha! this is my trusty dagger. Thy glistening beauty will soon be dimmed by the blood of yon pretender! Back! back in thy sheath! I'll soon have work for you. My rival! Ha, ha! My first, my last, my most hated enemy, you shall to-night succumb to my revenge! But I must arouse my faithful Jansen; he sleeps in the back chamber above. I'll go at once."

"Oh, my daughters, there's a man concealed in our room! Did you not hear him say so?" and she fairly screamed.

The daughters also roared at the top of their voices, and soon the door of the mysterious man was opened, and he issued forth in an excited manner, exclaiming:

"What's wrong? I thought I heard you say there was a man in your room! Where—where is he?"

"Stand back! You're a murderer!" the mother screamed.

She had hardly uttered the exclamation ere there was a violent ringing of the door-bell, and as the females were afraid either to go to their sleeping-apartment, where the accomplice was supposed to be or run down-stairs, and thus perhaps endanger their lives by coming in contact with the principal villain, they all commenced screaming as loud as possible.

"Break open the door!"

"We'll all be murdered!"

"Oh! Heaven protect us!"

"Wait till I get my revolver, and I'll make short work of the murderer!" said Mr. T. excitedly, as he rushed into his room.

Seeing him disappear the females precipitately hurried down-stairs and unlocked the hall door, when Robert Gilmore and two policemen, whose attention had been attracted by the noise Robert made in endeavoring to force open the door, immediately entered the hall.

"Oh, Robert, you have come just in time to save us!" and the mother, endeavoring to embrace her son, fell to the floor in a fainting condition.

"He's up-stairs—the murderer! He has gone for his revolver!" one of the ladies exclaimed.

"Policemen, why do you stand there like cowards? Give me one of your revolvers and I'll soon settle the villain!" and Robert snatched a pistol from the hands of one of the officers.

Running up the stairs, he met the stranger at the door of his apartment, and the light from the room being sufficiently luminous, Robert grasped the right hand of the man in which he held a pistol, and then pointed his own weapon at the stranger's head.

"Dare to move, and I'll blow you into eternity!"

"Take that pistol from my head and explain what you mean," said the stranger, with an attempt to subdue his involuntary although slight agitation.

"Explain what I mean!" echoed Robert. "You are a murderer!"

"I may have been guilty of such crimes when I first adopted my present vocation; but since then I have become so successful that no man dare now accuse me of sullying my reputation by mur——"

"Let us handcuff the villain!" interrupted one of the policemen. "He is a dangerous man!"

Further accusation compelled the stranger to plead innocent of any attempt to take human life; and when one of the officers threw more light upon the scene by igniting the gas in the hall, Robert started back in astonishment, and exclaimed:

"Surely, I've seen that face before."

"So have a great many people," answered the stranger coolly. "I've caused your female friends to think me a villain, because I was merely repeating the words of a villain. I never murdered anybody, although I may have 'murdered' a few prominent characters. I am an actor, and I was merely studying my part. You can see me perform some heinous crimes any night next week, if you but go over to the —— Theater. Although not a villain by nature, my business is to assume the character of a villain whenever the public or my manager desires it."

Robert soon recognized in the person of the stranger the celebrated "heavy man" of the —— Theater, whose line of business is the representation of the "principal villain" in each play; and further explanation succeeded in winning the favorable opinions of the females who had been so affrighted on that night of horror.

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